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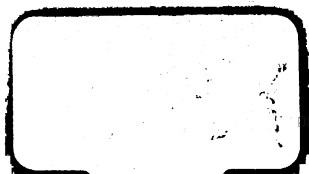
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BLOSSOM-BUD

AND HER GENTEEL FRIENDS.

A Story.

BY
MRS. JULIE P. SMITH,

AUTHOR OF
"WIDOW GOLDSMITH'S DAUGHTER,"
"CHRIS AND OTHO," "TEN OLD MAIDS," "THE WIDOWER,"
"HIS YOUNG WIFE," "LUCY," ETC., ETC.



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TO
"CARL,"
ONLY AND WELL-BELOVED SON
OF
MY DEAR DAUGHTER
LUCY.

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BLOSSOM-BUD

AND HER GENTEEL FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF THE HIGHWAYS AND HEDGES.



R. STARBIRD, of the firm of "Starbird & Pedlow," had a very handsome residence on one of the best streets in Millville.

The day after Christmas was the very coldest of the season. The factory hands down on Gonecusset street, were pinched and shivering, but the Starbird family were comfortable, bless you ; *they* enjoyed the bracing weather. It was the exact difference between needing and having.

Roaring River had been busy for weeks down the glen, with its ceaseless splash! splash! drip! drip!

trickle! trickle! and great fantastic piles of pale blue ice were the result, over which the restless water still kept its drowsy play, rippling and slipping into frozen silence.

The sun, shooting his rays through the rime and mist, tried in vain to destroy the symmetrical grottos and grotesque eyries the Ice King was skillfully building. They glistened and sparkled with more wonderful splendor beneath his touch, beautiful with diamonds and sapphires.

The butcher-boys racketed over the creaking-snow, chafing their blue noses, and blowing out their congealing breath in straight columns before them, and little ice needles hung all around the mouths of their fretted, impatient horses.

Christmas cheer was so abounding in the homes of the rich that it overflowed into the tenement houses. In fact, Mrs. Starbird was herself abroad in her costly sables, distributing turkeys among her husband's clerks and porters. God be praised for the good tidings which Christmas brings! and incline our hearts to speed on the great joy, till all the earth shall hear.

The fire roared and blazed in Mr. Starbird's dining-room; no cast-iron make believes, with their gas jets creeping uselessly out here and there; but

good, honest maple logs, able to flame and flash, and drop great mounds of white ashes from their consuming brands and ever-changing coals.

The furniture was handsome, appropriate and well-worn; the brown and white setter worked upon the rug before the hearth had seen hard service, and only one *crewel* eye was left to him, the other having been burned out with a hot poker by the son and heir, who desired to realize to his sister a picture he had been studying in a volume often to be found in orthodox libraries, called "Fox's Book of Martyrs"; and as for the two battered rockers in corner, they might have belonged to the little, small, wee bear, for somebody had set the bottoms out of them; there were also two high chairs in loving proximity against the wall, and two pictures hung over the mantel, such exact counterparts in feature and expression that they said to all beholders, as plainly as if they had spoken with loud voices: "Look at us! we are twins."

"Twins?" said Mr. Cymbaleus Adolphus Brown to the proud mother, one festive occasion when he was in full force. "Ah yes; brother and sister, I presume. And, pray, what do you call the lovely beings?"

"Clovis and Clotilde. My huspunt is a great his-

torian. He never wastes his time on novils. He found them somewhere and showed me the plates. Queer clothes, very ; folks would be hooted off the streets in this town if they rigged up like that. Maybe boys were better behaved where they lived ; I should hope so. I was quite prejudiced at first by their looks ; I never like anything conspicuous. Huspunt laughed and said : 'Emeline, we are not going to christen their gowns.' 'True, huspunt,' replied I, 'still I have to struggle to disintegrate their cognomens from their costooms.' But I was glad we took them. Clovis and Clotilde ! near enough alike, you understand, for twins, and yet sufficiently different. Huspunt says they were crowned heads, and, what is of more consequence in our country, they were perfectly respectable ; so it isent as if we had picked out Bloody Mary or Pope Joan, you know."

A dainty breakfast was spread on the carved table, that cold morning after Christmas, and Miss Starbird was seated in state, sipping her coffee and playing with her roll, for Miss Starbird was not hungry ; she had been dissipating the night before, and her indulgent mother permitted her to sleep as late as she would.

Mrs. Otho Groenveldt gave a fancy-dress party

for her Leonore, and though Mrs. Starbird, in her character of church-leader, theoretically disapproved of such revels, she could never dream of refusing an invitation from one of the *gente descente* among the old Roaring River families, whose notice and society she ambitiously desired for her twins; therefore, Clovis and Clotilde not only attended, but appeared in wonderful apparel fabricated after the *plates* which were the property of "my huspunt," most extravagant and costly; and remarkably proud were the fond parents of them and their magnificence.

Mrs. Starbird was a very affectionate, pleasant mother; she said she lived for her children, and her daily occupations demonstrated the truth of her statement. It was *not* her first impulse to say "no" to every request; on the contrary, she lent willing ears to their petitions, and granted them, if possible, making nothing of her own trouble or hard work in their behalf; and they, Clotilde especially, liked to hang about her, and kiss her, and say "How I love you, mamma. You are *so* good."

Clotilde was thinking about the girls and boys with whom she had sported at Brookside, while she dawdled over her chicken, half dreaming of the lovely music there, and half listening to a soft gurgle of song which her scarlet grosbeak was confid-

ing to her, and she had been for some minutes an object of curiosity and admiration to a couple of vagabond strollers outside the window, before she perceived them.

When their shuffling and stamping aroused her, she was quite startled to find two ragged, slouching lads so close to her ; their faces pinched with cold their eyes full of hungry longing, and she felt very sorry for them.

One was a harper, who carried his harp on his bent shoulders ; the other had a dingy, little, old fiddle under his arm, and as soon as Clotilde turned her eyes toward them, they straightened up from their stooping crouch, pulled their dirty hands from their pockets, and began blowing their stiffened fingers in preparation for plying their trade.

Not at all afraid, and full of interest in them and their instruments, the little lady got hurriedly down from the table and tripped toward them.

"Good morning, miss," called out the fiddler tucking his fiddle under his chin and drawing his bow across it. "Shall us give ye a twang of a tune for Christmas?"

He nodded and smiled at the small maiden, so dainty among her harmonious surroundings, and who was divided from him much further by circum-

stances, than by the French window against which he had just been flattening his purple nose.

He was a well-made lad, with a plump face full of color, crimson cheeks, black brows and long, curled lashes, a pair of very taking blue eyes, and a merry mouth. Over his thick crop of crisp curls, he had perched, in the sauciest way, a Tom O'Shanter cap with a tassel atop. His trowsers were tucked up, his coat hung in tatters around him, but he looked audaciously mischievous and roguish.

The harper said nothing; he seemed not able to take his eyes off the food which had failed to tempt Miss Starbird's appetite.

Clotilde observed the voracious craving in his looks, and she clapped her hands and laughed.

"He shall have my breakfast; it will be fun to see him eat," said she, "and they shall get warm, and then I will hear their music. I will have a concert all to myself."

She put eager effort to raising of the heavy sash, but her small arms were not strong enough, and in spite of all her tugs and grimaces it budged never an inch.

"The stingy old thing! it will not go up for me," cried she, "but the door will behave better, and you can come in as other folks do."

In another instant she stood on the threshold, where the bitter wind blew tears into her eyes and took liberties with her curls.

"Come boys! hurry before you are quite frozen," she called out in her clear voice.

"Laps and slams, Bob! what if she should give us a feed?" whispered the harper. "I say, there's a lot of jolly good victuals on that there table."

"Hush yer noise! mind your manners! now the pretty little lady is a lookin' at us. Make a bow, can't ye, and stop yer wheezin' like an old bag-pipe," replied the fiddler with a new impatience at his boorish comrade.

"How can I stop gettin' my breath while I live?" growled the harper. "I wish you had *my* cold in *your* throat and see how you would manage it."

"That's so, poor Ben. I didn't mean nothin'; see! she is a-beckonin' to us to enter her home, and she as sweet and fresh as a rose; shall us go?"

"In course we shall. Isent there a chance of a bit and sup inside?" answered the harper giving Bob a push. "Now then! sharp is the word."

Slowly and hesitatingly Bob advanced, but as Clotilde led the way into the cheerful house he followed her as far as the threshold of the dining-room.

"Are you not nearly perished?" asked she. "I am sure I am, only for going out that little minute."

"We are not too cold to play for you if you like to listen," said Bob.

"Don't you want some breakfast first? a cup of coffee and some meat?"

"We don't mind if we do get a bite, since the lady is so perlite; does we, Ben?" replied the fiddler showing his white teeth. "We've just comed from our hotel; but we might pass a compliment, might-ent we, partner?"

"Just as you say, Bob," answered the harper whose mouth watered at the thought. "I'm alus agreeable."

"That is, he means to be," laughed the fiddler, "he does his best, Ben does."

"There isent any boy that is always agreeable that I know; even my brother Clovis gets cross sometimes. Here, put that queer thing down off your shoulders, and lay it in the corner. King David has got one like it in our great Bible. I should think you would be glad to straighten up once in a while. Now take these two chairs, nearest the fire, and begin to eat. I am going to be Mrs. Starbird, and pour your coffee. Look a here! don't I do it nice as a grown-up lady? Will you take two lumps, Mr. Fiddler?"

She held her head on one side and smiled as she poised the silver tongs above the bowl, in excellent imitation of her mother's table manners. Ben was already at work upon the chicken, with his head down, gobbling and crunching ; but Bob could not take his eyes off the pretty girl, hungry as he was, and he followed her light motions among the cups and saucers with admiring delight.

"Oh, dear ! I don't see how mamma keeps her face straight," exclaimed she, bursting into a merry laugh, "I can't ; you *do* look so droll."

"I don't mind your laughing at me a bit, miss, I like to see you," replied Bob, with native politeness.

While they were enjoying their amusement in each other, the waitress flung open the door.

"What *are* you about here, Miss Clotilde?" cried she, sourly eyeing the ragamuffins, "how did these get into my dining-room?"

"It is not your dining-room, Nano, it's mine. I let in the musicians myself ; they are my company, and you are not to call them names ; after we have finished breakfast they will have a concert. If you behave nicely, I'll let you hear it."

"Consort ! Well, you do beat all for a pranky young one ! There's a pair of pigs out yon in their pen would be a good match for yer company as ye

name these dirty beggars that has no call to be inside of a decent house, at all, at all. Come ! start ! ye street tramps wid all the snow and stuff ye are a-lavin on the carpet for me to scrub on me two knees after ye. I am ashamed for ye that don't know better than to be a sitten at that table, even if she did bid ye in."

"She is more nor half right," spoke up Bob, proudly, and hurriedly rising, "we are no fit comrades for ye, little lady. I won't stop a minute longer neither, to be earnin' ye a scoldin' "

"Nano scold *me* ! I guess not. I am Clotilde ; she is mamma's servant. You shall stay. I want you. You shall eat and play. You shall laugh some more ; and Nano shall bring you hot cakes."

"Hiff ! shall she !" screamed the angry maid ; "if ye wait till she do ye'll never in the world eat another meal."

She whisked out, and banged the door so hard that all the windows rattled, and the harp in the corner sent out a wail of fear or pain. In her haste she ran into cook, who was coming up for orders.

"Ugh, girl ! can't ye be easy ?" puffed cook, rubbing her fat stomach, "sure ye've elbows that wad do for lardin'-needles — what is the matter wid ye ?"

"Matter enough, wid beggars in the parlor, and yon divil's-bird, a orderin' me to wait on 'em. I'm sick wid such doin's, I am!"

"Indeed, 'tis no wonder; you and me had a full dose of beggars to home. I think I'll take a look at 'em. I guess I can stand the sight."

As soon as she stuck her head into the room, Clotilde flew at her with eager welcome and poured her grievance into her ears, getting plenty of admiration and endearment as she proceeded. "The winsome pictur! the purty darlin'! she has the heart as warm as a dove's nest; a sweet lady-kin born to be a joy to waitin' world."

"Fie, Nano! ye shall let Miss Clotilde have her will; 'tis a brave beginning of her day, and must bring a Christmas blessing on the house. Don't ye mind her, sweetin," added cook, pointing to the maid, who was already scolding in the distance, "what would ye like to have for the gossoons?"

"Only some cakes and another chicken," said Clotilde, trying hard not to cry. "I wish to make them happy just for a short while before they go away into the cold again."

"And it shall not be my fault if you don't. I'll fetch you all you ask for."

The two lads had watched the progress of events

with intense interest. Ben's loose, thick under-lip dropped. He dared not take another bite from the chicken bone in his hand; and Bob, with his eyes fixed on his small champion in doubt and wonder.

Ben began to gnaw again like a newly wound-up automaton; and Bob resumed the chair to which Clotilde with smiles invited him.

Cook was better than her word, and she stopped after she had produced the good things to see them disposed of, admiring the speed and dexterity of the ravenous lads in putting them out of sight; also observing how differently they behaved, one cramming as if he never expected a second stroke of such good luck, and the other, though very hungry, stopping to show his white teeth, and gaily to reply to the little lady's talk, enjoying even more her dainty prettiness than the delicious coffee she kept on pouring as long as she could coax her guests to empty the cups. Ben held out perseveringly after Bob was satisfied; and when he could swallow no more he slyly abstracted a couple of crullers and slipped them inside his jacket, and greedily eyed the remains of chicken, loath to leave a fragment after him.

"God bless ye, Miss Clotilde," said cook, "may ye always keep the same sweet charity for the poor

till ye are a saint entirely. Now, pipe up, ye spalpeens, in payment of her kindness, till ye make me pots and kettles beyant to skip to yer music and me-self a keepin' time wid 'em."

"No, Biddy; stay here," said Cotilde, pulling her arm as she turned to go to the kitchen, "stay with me and listen."

"I think I had better keep ye company while they stop," whispered the cook, under cover of the tuning and squeaking of the instruments. "Yon harper lad has a face I'd not like to trust, and him wid his hand in me pocket."

Bob began to sing in a voice already thinned and worn by street service :

"Father, dear father! come home with me now;"—to which his partner played an accompaniment, and he put a meaning and pathos into the pitiful words which were painfully suggestive of the suffering and sorrow in a drunkard's home, so that Clotilde was dissolved in tears, and cook wiped her eyes on her apron and then began to scold.

"And is that the best ye are able to give us; the heart-breaking ould thing that makes me as sad as a bride's wedding? I've had enough of that trouble that ye need not bring it back to me. If ye have never a jig nor reel, ye had best be going; Christ-

mas is no time to be worriten of us wid the world's woes that we've no power to heal."

"I wish I *had* gone afore I set the little mistress a weepin'," said Bob. "I don't know many songs, that is my best; folks are apt to drop us pennies when they hear it. I say, Ben, give her 'Corn riggs are bonny;' maybe that'll sufit her."

He struck off on his fiddle, wagging his elbow, and keeping time with his foot, laughing in hearty glee at cook, who snapped her fat fingers, and swung round to the rollicking tune till quite out of breath.

"That's more like Yule music," gasped cook, panting and holding her sides; "and quite enough of it, too. Get along wid ye's for hinderin' creatures, and me bread a runnin' over in the pans. Let 'em go, Miss Clotilde, till I see 'em safe off the place." She added, in a whisper: "Oh, darlin'! the breakfast is plenty; don't give 'em money."

"But they must eat again," said the generous hostess, emptying her purse into Bob's hand. "It is only a few dimes; I wish I had more."

"Well, I never in all my life can forget that pretty lady," said Bob, as he and his mate trudged down the street; "how I'd like to be a grand gen-

tleman wid a fine estate, and visit her every day, on a prancin' horse wid a sweepin' long tail."

"Me sthumic jest aches, it's that full," replied Ben. "If I was a rich cove, I'd have them good things all the while."

Bob cast a disgusted look at the harper's heavy, sensual face, and ceasing his confidences, he tramped on in silence.

"Cook," said Miss Starbird, after her visitors had departed, "I am quite satisfied with you; when I grow up, I will take you to live with me."

"Sure I couldn't wish for a bonnier madam," replied cook, whose eyes twinkled. "It might be yer mother herself a speakin' to me, yer that like her; as wise and old as the kelpie that's lived a hundred year, wid yer sober, descreeet ways, and another hour ye'll be racin' and skippin' like yer kitten. She is satisfied wid ye, cook, is Miss Clotilde," chuckled the good natured-Bridget, "do ye mind that now? Take them words along wid ye, and be goin' to yer kitchen afore she changes her mind. Heaven blessin' on the sweet womankin; as soft and tender as the dawn, and as able and managin' as her own mother's head-piece."

As soon as Mrs. Starbird returned home, Nano carried to her an account of the morning's proceed-

ings, colored according to her conception of them, hoping to procure Bridget a reprimand, and confidently expecting praise for her unsuccessful endeavor to preserve the dignity of the family uncontaminated.

"Dear, thoughtful child; how lovely of her!" exclaimed the mother. "I am sorry, Nano, that you were not willing, pleasantly, to assist in her charity. I really must thank good Bridget for being so kind and comfortable."

"Oh, indeed, ma'am, no thanks is my due," said cook, who happened, by the merest chance, to be passing through the hall. "'Twould have done yer soul good to see Miss Clotilde a sittin' in yer place, behavin' like yer very self, and the poor, dirty lads tuckin' away the victuals. I'd not a missed the enlivenin sight for a week's wages."

CHAPTER II.

A BAD SMASH UP.



THE day after Christmas was quite an eventful one for the Starbird family, and an incident occurred in the afternoon, which was by no means so pleasant or profitable as Clotilde's vagabond picnic.

Mr. Starbird was a good-natured, jolly man, full of indulgences for his family, lavish in his outlays for their comfort and pleasure ; but, unfortunately, he had a hot, hasty temper, which was quite likely to find expression in hard words and unpremeditated actions, which dreadfully astonished himself and his friends, and of which he was bitterly ashamed when the fit was passed, and he was in his right mind again.

He was subject to attacks of Berserker rage like the old Northmen, when his eyes got red and flaming, his breath puffed forth in gusty whisks, and his tongue ran unchecked through cholerick vituperations.

Mrs. Starbird, a lady of excellent sense, sometimes permitted herself to say, softly, "Huspunt !

huspunt !” at such times, but she never reproached him, or raised her voice in angry recrimination ; and she kept her respect for her better half, and was very happy with him ; and the twins were not only not afraid of their father, but lived on terms of perfect familiarity and confidence with him.

He could never do enough for his victims after one of his high times, and it was whispered that his partner, Mr. Pedlow, had been known to provoke the tempests and kindle the explosions, in order to procure business concessions which his finessing failed to attain, and which shame and repentance made easy and certain.

Mr. Starbird had a coachman, named Hans, whom he took from Mrs. Deacon Williams, and with whom he received a doubtful sort of character.

“He’ll drink like a fish, once in a while,” said that respectable lady. “He will get on a tear ; but if you want a fellow to earn his wages, he is the very one for you.”

Hans proved very helpful and efficient, ready and willing to turn his hand to a variety of odd jobs, and, as women like such service, he became quite a favorite in the house.

“I declare, huspunt !” said Mrs. Starbird, “our new man is quite a treasure ; remarkably good tem-

pered and handy in all sorts of work, from blacking boots to waiting on the table in white kids; and he's the most ingenuous creature—give him a chip and a jack-knife, and he'll whittle out any kind of a knick-knack you've a notion for."

After dinner that day Hans took his master to the bank, and was ordered to drive up and down till he was wanted.

A convenient dram-shop was an attraction most potent for the coachman; and he took so many drinks to keep out the cold that before the merchant had completed his business his Portland sleigh was in fragments, his white bear robe torn to ribbons, his horses ruined, and his ingenuous servant half-dead on the street.

His reeking breath when he was fished out from under the heels of the frantic team spread an atmosphere around him like a still-house. This was one of the tears against which Mr. Starbird had been warned, and bad enough it was. By the time he had found out the full extent of his losses, and walked home through the slippery streets, he was in a fuming rage which was ready to burst upon the first unlucky creature who might cross his path.

CHAPTER III.

HOW CLOVIS LOST HIS SKATES.



HE winter sun had gone down behind the Pinnacle and left the Flats in gray shadow before the skating party there assembled got enough of their sport, and could make up their minds to leave the glare ice of Roaring River and separate to their several homes.

Clovis Starbird was especially loth to go. His father had given him a splendid pair of rockers, Christmas morning ; russet leathered, gold mounted, silver buckled ; Clovis was quite a hero on account of them and the curlicues he was able to cut by their help ; and Clotilde was extremely proud of his performances, and accepted the praises of the girls as homage to herself. She told the story of her Bohemian guests while he and the other boys were pushing her and her friends in the delightful runner-chairs, and they all said what good fun it must have been ; and they waltzed and glided in couples and lines, racing with the fleet wind ; and, to crown all, Mystie Eagan came down from the Up-Pasture farm and brought a great basket of jumbles. Altogether,

Clovis declared that he had never had such a perfectly bang-up good time in his whole life.

"Oh, Clovis," said Pauline Bradshaw, as he was unbuckling his skates, "I am going to take Clotilde home with me, and you must come in the evening. Your mother won't mind, will she?"

"I'll make *that* all right," answered Clovis, loftily. "It will be capital ; I've some new words for Dumb Crambo."

Clovis ran all the way home, his cheeks glowing with health, his heart beating high with happiness and eager anticipations. He went stamping up the steps of his father's handsome house, whistling "The Beautiful Blue Danube," and thinking how Pauline had swung around to its cadence as long as he could find breath to furnish the music ; and he burst into the parlor where Mr. Starbird was stalking up and down, his hands buried deep in his pockets, his shoulders level with his ears, and his forehead gathered into so deep a frown that his angry eyes looked like glowing coals beneath his bent brows.

Unfortunately Clovis took no note of all these signs of his father's humor, but dashed at him unceremoniously:

"I say, dad ! you jolly, old dad ! You are the best dad I ever had in my life ; and there was not

such another pair of rockers on the river. Look at them, don't you wish you was a boy?"

"Where the mischief have *you* been, you young rascal?" growled the merchant, snatching away his arm, and glaring ferociously into the handsome, animated face lifted to his.

"Been, father? Why, down on the flats skating. Where should I be?" replied Clovis, a good deal disconcerted and provoked by the reception he was getting.

If Clovis *had* a glaring fault, it was his propensity to answer back when reproved, and he was able to scowl almost as darkly as his father.

"At home, sir; making yourself useful; always out of the way when you are wanted; a lazy, idle dog, seeking your own pleasure——"

"But, father; I thought you wanted me to go and skate. What did you give me the rockers for, if you didn't mean me to use them?"

"Because I was a fool to waste money on such a saucy, impudent, young scoundrel! I'll put a stop to that nonsense, once for all, here! Now say 'skate' to me again, if you dare!"

What, with his losses, his worries and his son's ill-timed pertness, Mr. Starbird parted with any little scraps of good temper he might have had left,

and in a red-faced, roaring rage, he snatched the elegant Christmas gift, which he had bestowed with such hearty good-will, from the lad's grasp, and hurled it into the great wood fire blazing on the hearth, and the flames sprang up in hot fury, with sparks and flashes and licking tongues of yellow light, as the fresh fuel landed among them.

Clovis stood still, with his arm extended, while his father went on pouring out his wrath in dreadful words of abuse and accusation, such as he never dreamed could be flung at him by any one living, much less by his own dear "dad." He made no effort to rescue his property, and the russet leather writhed and crisped, and the wood blackened and scorched, and his beautiful skates were gone forever. His blood began to boil in his veins, and he got hotter and hotter, until he broke out in a voice which made itself heard above the savage bellow of the merchant :

"I hate you ! You are a wicked, disgusting tyrant ; and if you were not my father, I'd kill you."

Clovis shuddered as the words left his lips, he felt as if a deep gulf had opened between him and all he loved, never to be bridged over or crossed again. He turned and ran out of the room—out of the house—and banged the door, before the Berser-

ker got his breath, or really took the sense of the lad's indignant utterances. As soon as the despoiled and infuriated youngster was fairly out of sight, however, reason and kindness began to get the better of rage, and coming back to *sense* and love, he realized what he had done, and he went swiftly and hid his shame and repentance in his own room.

Not more than five minutes afterward, Mrs. Starbird returned from the "Woman's Exchange," of which she was a valuable and active member. As she entered the parlor, she smelt the burnt leather, espying her husband's soft hat in a crumpled heap on the floor, and his fur mittens sticking on the mantel, amongst the scattered debris of some frail and costly bric-a-brac, which adorned the place safe and intact when she left her lares and penates a few hours before ; observing, also how the carpet was strewn with paper lighters, and that the Bohemian jug which held them lay in fragments. She felt herself in an atmosphere of tempest, and she went straight to the Inner Rest, where the unfortunate merchant was accustomed to hide after his "high times."

"Huspunt ! huspunt !" said she, softly, "what is the matter ? Huspunt, it is me—your wife ; let me come in."

2*

34 *HOW CLOVIS LOST HIS SKATES.*

He opened the door, showing her the sad, humble face she dreaded and hated to see.

"I am afraid I have been very cruel and unjust to my boy, Emeline, and I believe he was not quite dutiful to me."

"Yes, huspunt, I perceived by the looks of things down-stairs that there had been an occasion ; but don't feel *too* bad, for our son loves us, and if he has been naughty, he will soon be sorry and want to make up. I heard about Hans ; it is enough to provoke a saint."

"I haven't acted much like a saint, Emeline. If there is a handsomer pair of skates to be bought for money, the rascal shall have them, just as soon as he says, 'Dad, I am sorry,' " ended the merchant, after a full confession, and such good and gentle comments from his Emeline as were more comforting than priestly absolution.

"Never fear, huspunt, 'All's well that end's well,' " said Mrs. Starbird, bestowing upon her lord her accustomed kiss of peace.

CHAPTER IV.

ANYWHERE, ANYWHERE, OUT OF THE WORLD.

N raced Clovis, down the walk, out into the street, through the darkening night, never stopping to dash away the tears of burning indignation which filled his eyes, nor trying to check the angry passion boiling within him. The sudden culmination of his father's rage was so unexpected, and it seemed to him, so tantalizing and abominable, that he had just breath enough left to jerk out his favorite exclamation : " I vow, I wouldn't treat a dog so," when he reached the depot of the Holly Dell and Toptown station.

A snorting engine stood upon the track, blowing two horizontal fumes of mist from its puffing nostrils, while the pulse-beat of the steam went on throbbing with a suppressed power, waiting its chance to mangle and destroy.

It was Black Hawk, the mightiest locomotive on the road. Clovis knew it well, and had entirely won its driver's heart by his admiration of its strength and beauty. He had often been treated to runs up and back, and was fond of the pastime.

As soon as the great red eye glared on his face, the engineer espied him, and called out to him to come up.

"I'll take you as far as the Deep Cut, and Patterson will bring you back. Just the night for a lark, and you'll be safe home long before the old folks are abed."

"All right," answered Clovis. "I am going to Toptown. I had as lief go up there as anywhere."

"Toptown! Master Starbird, and alone?"

"Yes," said Clovis, swinging himself onto the platform, "and further, too, maybe. Now, you old Ingin-giver, you mean, old dad, I guess you will find out I'm not going to stand everything," added the lad to himself; "burning up my skates and calling me all those names."

The engineer did not find his passenger the jolly companion he expected, and after a few efforts to engage him in his usual boy tricks and fun, he left him alone and betook himself to whistling, while Clovis sat mute, with his fur cap pulled down over his ears, and his coat collar drawn up to meet it. Among his tumultuous thoughts had already intruded many of his twin sister, Clotilde, and he wondered how she would get home, and if his mother would be anxious about her. Ah! his mother!

a great sob came up and choked him. If he could have got down at that instant, he might have returned to her ; but he had time to go over his grievance, and also to recall his dreadful language to his father, and both his anger and his pride had the better of all other feelings.

When he reached Toptown, at eleven o'clock, he leaped down into the frosty darkness, without a good-bye to his disappointed friend, and crunched over the snow with hasty strides.

"I wonder what's amiss with that chap?" said the engineer, peering after Clovis ; "he ain't a mite like himself. I'll look sharp how I treat him to any more rides. Such a gay youngster, too ; always laughing and chaffing and kicking up his heels. I hope nothing's gone wrong anywheres. 'Taint no ways likely ; that rich man's son with all the money he wants, can't have any trouble. Troubles is for the poor. There he is, hanging around ; don't seem to know what he wants. I've a great mind to call after him ; make him mad as like as not, and my time's up, anyhow ; he's a deceivin' misleadin' little fraud, that's what he is."

Clovis stood on the road, watching the train he had left, till the grumbling engineer had taken it out of sight around the curve, and a new one came

whistling and ringing its bell along the next track.

A man stepped beside it, carrying a lantern, and tapping the wheels with a hammer, and Clovis read "Toptown and New York," as his light flickered past.

A couple of half-grown lads passed close to him talking and disputing; the one nearest wheezed and coughed, while he jeered at what his companion was saying in a very sorrowful voice.

"You ought to been ashamed to have stealed 'em, and that little lady so kind! Oh, Ben! what ever will she think of us?"

"She'll think we've boned her spoons for one thing. What you gassin' about? You're took honest mighty sudden, you are. You've lifted lots of traps, and split your sides a laughin' over the fun it was. You git out!"

"But I never was treated so good by anybody afore in my life," replied Bob, sorrowfully, "and she axed us to come agin, that pretty creater did. *I* meant to go. We can't never show her our faces now, never, no more."

"I'll keep the spoons myself, so you needn't make such a fuss. *I* don't feel bad. I wish I'd a got a bigger haul—but I don't care for this here nose-

wiper ; she dropped it right at my feet when she was a pourin' the dimes into your hand. I picked it up 'cause it's agin my principles to leave anything I could git—but you may have it !”

Ben nearly strangled, he was so tickled over his theft and his partner's woe-begone face ; the minute Bob's eyes caught sight of the dainty bit of cambric fluttering in Ben's dirty fingers, he eagerly snatched it.

“That's hern,” said he, “I seen it with her a stickin' out of her little pocket ; her name's in the corner ; I can't read it, but I know what it is ; I heard 'em call her by it, and she a sittin' by the table where she just filled us full of good things. Oh, Ben ! how could you do it ? How could you be so mean to Miss Clotilde ?”

Clovis started as the word struck his ear, and he followed the boys to look in their faces, wondering what it could mean. He saw that they were strollers with a harp and fiddle to pay their way, and he listened, trying to catch more of their talk, but as they were debating upon their next stopping place he felt that he must have been mistaken, and fell back among his own absorbing trials and forgot all about them.

A stout, comfortable looking gentleman came

along carrying a traveling bag, and made for the car. The atmosphere of respectability and solid strength he diffused around him impelled Clovis to follow in his wake, and, when he was placed, to seat himself not far away.

As soon as the train started, the two strollers, who had been crouching by the hot stove, began to twang their instruments, and then Bob piped up his one song :

"Father, dear father, come home with me now."

Clovis had sung the words a hundred times, and never felt any especial pathos in them, but now he followed them in his mind clear through to the end, sorrowfully. He was awaking to the fact that there was a great deal of unpleasantness in the world, of which he had never dreamed before.

When the ragged fiddler came to him holding out his "Tam O'Shanter" cap, Clovis searched eagerly his pocket and produced a couple of dimes which he tossed in. Bob stood an instant after his careless "thank ye," staring at their donor unconsciously putting his hand to his breast where the handkerchief was safely hidden. He had a sort of vague desire to ask him a question, but there suddenly gleamed over Clovis's face a flash of such fierce impatience and anger, and he whisked about and turned his back so

haughtily, that Bob felt no longer any inclination for his neighborhood ; and, having finished his rounds, he went away to his corner, and he and the harper put their heads together and whispered over their gains.

The air of the coach was close and stifling, the exhausting passion which had shaken Clovis up till his heart throbbed and his head ached, the fatigue of his afternoon's pastime, the bitter cold he had just left, all conspired to make him stupid, and, before long, he was fast asleep.

He dreamed that his sister Clotilde gave him a pair of golden skates, and that the drunken wretch of whom the fiddler had been singing snatched them away and offered them to the harper, whose grinning exultation merged into the provoking scowl of his father before it resolved itself into the quizzical face of the conductor who had him by the shoulder.

"Come, bub ! no fighting," said he, good-naturedly, as Clovis squared his fists at him. "Your ticket is what I am after."

Clovis stared sleepily in the man's face, and began to rub his eyes.

"I haven't got anything for you," said he. "Go along and let me alone."

"In course he hasen't," wheezed Ben, "he's a dead beat, he is, and dead sleepy too."

Bob laughed so merrily that those around him were infected with his mirth, and the conductor laughed also, though he suspiciously eyed Clovis, and gave him another smart shake.

"Where are you going, boy?" demanded he.

"I am going on a journey, *man*," replied Clovis, sitting straight up, wide awake, and ready for anything. "If you are conductor on this car, I guess I am going where you conduct to!"

"I sha'n't conduct you far unless you pay your fare."

"Fare?" answered Clovis, feeling in his pockets. "I didn't make up my mind to start more than a month ago, and I never thought about a ticket."

"Dead-head," wheezed the harper, chuckling, "expects to go off free of charge, like an air-gun."

"You will have a sore head if you don't mind your own business," retorted Clovis, still searching.

"Don't be quarrelsome, youngster; you may pay me to the next station and you can buy your ticket there—eighty cents," said the conductor, holding out his hand.

"Hi, Bob! look sharp till he forks out his gold!

I say, sir, that chap hasn't got any money, but he's got his life insured in the Walker and Doolittle Company."

"There !" yelled Clovis, triumphantly producing his handsome purse, "I vow ! I began to think some scalawags not a mile off had picked my pocket. What do you say to those, dirty-faces ?" he added, displaying a roll of bills. "I must not use that, because it is not mine," thought he suddenly, "but I reckon I have enough without."

"Counterfeits, sir ; that chap is sentenced to be hung !"

"Hung ?" repeated the conductor.

"Yes, sir," said Bob, kicking up his heels, "in a picture-frame, over the manteltry-piece."

Clovis paid the eighty cents and hastily restored his wallet to his pocket. He hardly heard the chaff and fun of the two strollers, or the laughter of the passengers ; such a very unwelcome thought thrust itself upon his attention. That twenty dollars was given him to pay his drawing-master—poor, hard-working, Mr. Dupuy ; and with a bitter pang he regretted his negligence. His skates, and his eagerness to enjoy and exhibit them, had driven the errand intrusted him by his father entirely from his head ; and here he was, running away from home, with

money which was not his! What would they all think of him?

The stroller-lads were talking in whispers, and Bob often stole glances at the well-dressed boy who was so deep in his unpleasant reflections that he was oblivious of their bad-smelling neighborhood.

"I say, Ben, he might be Miss Clotilde's brother, sure enough," said the fiddler, after a long stare.

"He might be the Pope of Rome if he was smart enough. What do you 'spose her brother would be a doin' here all alone? That sort don't trust their young uns off by themselves; us, that hasen't got no felks, has the liberty. Which pocket did he tuck that there swag into?"

"I wouldn't try to take 'em, Ben—he give me money. Besides, I'll bet you'll get licked. He won't stand much meddlin'."

"A nice partner you are! What's got into you? I'm goin' to have that cash, and if you don't help me we'll come to a fuss, you and me. I'll let you trudge alone. I can pick up plenty of mates that'll suit my time of day."

"Don't talk that way, Ben. I didn't mean nothin'."

"Then don't be sayin' nothin'," growled Ben; "and look a here—mind now, till I tell you."

The harper whispered and wheezed, and Bob listened and laughed, while the train racketed along through the darkness to the next station.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE STARS SAW.



LOVIS hurried out of the car intending to act upon the conductor's advice and purchase a ticket to New York. New York was a long way from Roaring River ; it was a great city, and in it lived Mr. Zoar Starbird. Even in his wild and hap-hazard state of mind the runaway had sense enough left to know that a relative who *might* help in case of need would be a convenience, and he felt a degree of safety in trying his fortunes in the same town with Uncle Zoar, though he meant to go alone, if possible.

The two strollers were ahead of him when he jumped from the platform, and he had not taken a dozen steps before the harper ran violently against him, sticking out his foot ; and the fiddler gave him

a rough push in the back, making him trip and helping him to measure his length on the ground.

"What's the counterfeitin' chap a runnin' into us for," cried Ben, falling atop of Clovis and holding him down, "jest wash his face for him, Bob, and learn him better manners."

They used their temporary advantage stuffing the dirty snow down his back, into his ears, and scrubbing his cheeks; while he resisted, tooth and nail. Ben swung his fists and his feet savagely; but Bob pelted and laughed, enjoying the sport.

Clovis was not undermost very long, and he struggled up half-blind and mad, spitting and spluttering.

"It is my turn now," shouted he; but his tormentors had had all they wanted of the frolic; they were alert and nimble; and after shying a couple of parting ice-balls, which hit hard and stung like needles, they ran off down the track, out of sight, before he could pull himself together enough to follow.

"I vow," exclaimed he, picking up his cap and rubbing his smarting skin, "I vow, I wouldn't treat a dog so, and I have no time to catch up the mean scamps. If I do, that train will go. I wonder where that plaguey old ticket-office is hiding itself so as to worry a fellow some more."

The gentleman whose appearance had pleased the

runaway, and near whom he had sat during the trip, had stepped down after him, partly to keep him in sight. He had been amused with his audacious smartness, and had watched him attentively. He did not see the beginning of the fracas, but he surmised that the strollers were the aggressors, and he approached with his cane up ready to lay it on them if necessary, when Clovis sprang to his feet.

"I'll show you the way, my boy," said he, kindly, "and you will have to step out. Your little game of bluff has nearly used up your spare minutes."

"Yes, sir, it has. I don't see why they pitched into me that way, either. They commenced to be mean just as soon as they started on the car."

"They rather got the best of it, I thought."

"Why shouldn't they? coming up on the sly like cowards behind my back. The ugly, biggest one got a few hard knocks, though. I'll bet his nose will be swelled up to-morrow."

"Rough fellows! That is their idea of fun, I suppose. Here we are—don't lose any time."

"One ticket to New York," said Clovis. "How much is it?"

"Ten dollars," replied the brisk clerk, handing out the pass but still keeping it within reach.

"Ten dollars!" echoed Clovis, "oh, dear, then I

shall have to use Mr. Dupuy's twenty, after all !
What a pity !"

He was hurriedly feeling in all his pockets while he spoke. "Where's my money !" screamed he, after turning the last one inside out.

"Can't answer hard questions," remarked the clerk, coolly, replacing the ticket on the pile. "You must try your conundrums on somebody else."

"But I have lost it. I had my purse right here, and it is gone."

"Don't stand staring at me and blocking up the way. When you find the cash I'll find the ticket, and not before."

Clovis shrank back as other travelers began to elbow and crowd him, and he had a good mind to cry ; but he compromised the matter by drawing his hand across his eyes, and giving breath to his favorite exclamation, "I vow, I wouldn't treat a dog so."

Those nearest looked at him, some scoffingly and some in pity, but all were in a hurry. Benevolence has to be gotten up in some human hearts, like steam in an engine, before it has power to move, and as none of them were fired up to charity heat, they, with one accord, skurried off to their places in the train, at which the bewildered lad helplessly gazed, All but one, the stout gentleman, who said, quietly.

"Pretty bad fix, this, isn't it, my boy! What will you do now?"

"They stole it!" screamed Clovis, suddenly. "I didn't lose it. That was what they were up to, hunting me around. They are gone! They're thieves! I can't help myself. That fellow in yonder is a fool," jerking his head at the clerk, who was getting ready to shut up. "I'll go to New York, now, if I have to walk. I will, just to spite him! by jingo!"

"Good spunk, but I am afraid you might have a chance to learn what tired and hungry mean before you got there, besides getting lost, or worse. Come, I've got an extra ticket. I'll lend it to you. When you get home, (home is a nice, warm place, to-night; there's a good, soft bed at home,) your father can refund to me. I should hate to have *my* boy left standing in this cold, alone, if I had one."

"I—am—not—going back. I am going on," said Clovis, slowly, and with a very sober face; "but if you will trust me, I feel sure I can pay you; and as true as I live, I will try. I had no idea it was so inconvenient to be without money; but I'll have some before long," he added, cheerfully, "and if I ever come across that harper-fellow"—

"Will you dance to his music and give him a quarter?"

"No, *sir*, no quarter ; hard knocks and plenty of them. My face smarts yet."

"But you are a little gentleman , he is a poor, ignorant beggar."

"He knew enough to steal my purse, and I'll teach him how to feel sorry for it."

"Don't brag, boy; time enough to double up your fists when you see your enemy. I don't like fighting lads much, though I must acknowledge you *do* owe him a drubbing. There goes the last tinkle of the bell—we had better take our places."

The gentleman left Clovis to himself a while after they were seated, but he turned half toward him and scanned him with good-humored scrutiny, liking his fresh face and brusque, boyish self-assertion, and guessing the quick-coming thoughts which were crowding, all at once, into a young head not used to trouble.

"So you are going *on*, are you? That means that your home lies behind us, and that you are leaving it for the first time?"

"Yes, sir, I have started for myself. I am going into business."

"Indeed!" replied the gentleman, smiling.
"Would you mind telling me what sort?"

"Oh, no. I'd as soon tell you as not if I knew

myself," answered Clovis, taking off his handsome seal cap so as to admire the ticket he had stuck into it. "I guess a store would suit me. I know a good deal about stores. My dad says I am cut out for a merchant. Dick and I had a pin-store, last summer. I cleared six hundred and three pins, and ten cents in cash."

"Success in your first enterprise is a good record to go from," said the gentleman, laughing. "What could you do in a store?"

"Anything that any boy could. I am not proud. I'd keep books if I got a good salary."

"Modest youth! And what do you call a good salary?"

"Enough to pay my debts first off," said Clovis. "That I've got to have! What is your business, sir? Maybe I could work for you?"

"I own a smallish store, but I have a book-keeper."

"Oh, I am not particklar to be that. I don't believe I should like to stand all day before a desk with a pen stuck over my ear. I'll do anything you set me at."

"Now you talk business. I began by carrying parcels."

"That would suit me first rate. I've seen them

tearing around the streets, driving like fun, a good, smart horse and a red wagon. Hire me, won't you, sir?"

"We don't give our messengers any steeds except shanks-mares. A young gentleman like you would be too proud for that sort of traveling."

"You are laughing at me. You ought to see me run! There was only one fellow that could beat me. That was, Bid Flanagan, but I could skate farther and faster than she."

The remembrance of his last frolic brought freshly to his mind the scene which had followed it, and the dreadful certainty that all pleasures were lost to him, and, though he was absent, his best friends would go on being happy without him, made him feel that he should cry if he opened his lips again. He tried hard not to shame his boyhood before his new acquaintance, and he threw himself back in the corner, and couldn't talk any more.

The gentleman observed how his mouth hardened into obstinate lines, determined and yet exceedingly sorrowful; and, respecting his rights as some men are able to respect the rights of the young, he forbore to question him further, although he experienced much amusement in his pert replies; and, while he laughed, he also sighed, wondering what

might become of such a rash, inexperienced youngster in a city full of strangers.

The cars went racketing on through the night. The great, calm, glorious, distant stars shone serenely in the heavenly vault, majestically and coldly indifferent to the sufferings and joys of the earthly creatures below them ; the trees in the forests rustled and shook in their frost mantles ; the snow lay glistening white above the pulseless hearts in the lonesome grave-yards ; and the bitter wind crept through cracks and crevices of poor homes, and chilled a helpless, handsome baby into cold marble, and there was no eye to pity, no arm to save ; while terror and despair were busy in the Starbird mansion, and Clovis, the runaway, slept and dreamed.

When he awoke he was leaning against the broad breast of a stranger whom it took a couple of seconds to recognize.

"Oh ! excuse me, sir," exclaimed he, "I did not mean to make pillow of you. I thought at first you was my dad, but I know now. I am in the old car. I guess I have been asleep."

"I would not have wakened you, but I get off here, and must bid you good-bye. I am going to knock about among the factories," said the gentleman, standing up and buttoning his overcoat. "Re-

member, you owe me ten dollars, and, if you really wish for employment, you go to my store and I will see what can be done. Here is my card, 'Wolfe, Lambe and Co.' I am the Co. My name is Bell. You can easily find it. Our house is well known in New York."

"Are you the bell that warns the lambs against the wolves?" asked Clovis, with a saucy laugh, as he took the card. "I should think there ought to be a shepherd in your firm to make it all safe."

"Pretty good!" replied Mr. Bell, looking queerly at Clovis. "You don't keep back what you want to say, very often, I imagine. A shepherd—hum! capital idea. I must tell my partners. Now, before I shake hands, I don't wish to pry, but do you mind confiding to me your intentions? Where will you strike out first?"

"I shall start right off to find my uncle. If I hadn't lost my money, I would not have gone near him till I had tried my luck, but as it is"—

"Your uncle! Has he three golden balls over his door?"

"Not that I know of, sir. He had a masquerade, last year—let me see—he lives—oh, I remember—he lives on Murray Hill."

"Do you know your way?"

"I expect I can find it. I'm not a bit afraid to ask questions."

"Perhaps I might help you."

"Thank you, sir. I mean to help myself. I am going to begin as I expect to hold out. I am only a boy, but I've got to behave like a man. I am much obliged all the same, and I shall be sure to come and see you. I thank you very much for your goodness about the ticket, and I thank you for letting me put my head on your shoulder. I like you very much indeed."

"Well spoken, my lad ; brave luck to you ; and if you should meet that harper"—

"I'll talk to you about that after I have drubbed him ; you said I mustn't brag."

The rest of the run was lonesome enough to Clovis, and the hubbub and clatter into which he stepped out of the depot were confusing and disagreeable ; but the morning sun shone down upon him so warm, and his youth braced him up with such hope in his strength and ability to succeed in his wishes, that he pushed on with purpose and determination.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT.



T was late in the afternoon, and Clovis was just walked off his feet, when he, at last, arrived at his uncle's residence, on Murray Hill.

The shutters were closed, and dust and dried leaves lay thickly on the broad steps to the street door. After ringing the bell till he was tired, he tried the area entrance, and then he peeped in the key-hole. At last, he knew for certain that he was not to be admitted, and began to feel sure that the place was shut up and deserted.

He had eaten nothing since devouring Myrtie Eagen's jumbles, and he was hungry as a gray wolf of the wood.

"If I had not given my dimes to those ungrateful beggars," thought he, "I would buy a piece of bread; as it is"—

A policeman, who had been watching his endeavors to effect an entrance to the empty house, came up and stood stock still, and stared at Clovis while he wiped the water out of his eyes.

"Crying, are you?"

"No, I am not. It's the dust flying 'round where it isn't wanted."

"You seem to be snuffling?"

"Well, if that is any of your business, I'll tell you. I've got a cold in my head. It's my head, and I'll snuff it off if I feel like it."

"Don't be saucy," retorted the officer, grinning. "What are you doing here?"

"I *was* trying to get into my uncle's house."

"Your uncle! What is his name?"

"Starbird—is he on your visiting list?"

"He isn't on yours, young impudence. He went to Europe, with all his family, ten days ago. You ought to have let him know you was a comin'; probably he'd a waited for you."

"Are those your public sentiments privately expressed? Well, they do you honor. Don't let me detain you, because you might be interfering with some other fellow while you are wasting time on me. Good day."

Though Clovis carried it off bravely, sauntering out of the policeman's sight, with his head up, he felt a great lump in his throat.

"I vow! Uncle Zoar," exclaimed he, "I vow! I wouldn't treat a dog so. Hungry! I could gnaw a

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raw alligator, feathers and all. Shall I beg, or starve? Clotilde is at supper, hot biscuits and honey, and pound-cake. I'll bet, my sister is crying this very minute."

He pulled his cap over his eyes, and dropped his head on his breast. While he walked aimlessly on, he heard, without heeding, a thin voice singing:

"Father, dear father, come home with me now,"

—and, turning a corner, he ran into a boy about his own size who, with his back toward him, was looking up at a window.

The strains had ceased, but they had aroused vindictive thoughts of his enemies who were the cause of his present unpleasant predicament; and, when he lifted his head and found them right before him, he caught the harper in a regular bear's hug, causing him to drop his instrument and defend himself.

"Leave go, you little devil," wheezed Ben. "What are you about? Hit him over the head with your fist, Bob. He'll bring the blue-coats onto us. Hush your noise, you roaring ape! I never did nothing to you. By golly! it's the counterfeiter."

"You know me well enough," gasped Clovis, struggling to keep his hold. "Hand me my money.

I'll choke you blind if you don't give back my purse. Quick ! before you breathe once more."

It was a fierce scuffle. Clovis held his own till the fiddler, who stood back at first, ran to his mate's assistance, twitching off the lad's cap, and, twisting his fingers into his thick, brown curls, he pulled aside his head with a violent jerk and held it fast.

The sudden attack enabled Ben to get his arm free and he struck Clovis a very nasty blow between the eyes, which made the world turn around in a giddy, ghastly whirl, and sent him reeling against the iron railing.

"Don't hurt the poor cove, he's been drinkin' too much buttermilk. It makes him stagger," cried Bob. "I say, did us ever see the Prince afore?"

"You were in the car, last night, and you stole my money. Give it back, or I'll lick you both!" panted Clovis, hardly able to stand.

"Don't hurt us ; we are good little boys, we never went in no car—you must be dreamin'," laughed Bob. "I say, Ben, this is a jolly fine cap," he added, as he picked up Clovis's handsome seal and fitted it above his tangled mat of crisp curls.

"I'm goin' for that there coat of hissen," whispered Ben, "you ketch holt and help, and we'll peel him 'way down afore he knows what ails him."

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"In three shakes of a lamb's tail," said Bob. "My eye! Isn't this a lark?"

The two set their knees against Clovis and pinned him fast, dexterously dodging the uncertain blows he dealt at random.

"Pull quick, Bob, and we'll go shears. To think that we should fall foul of the flat twist! Keep your eyes peeled around. There ain't nobody a lookin', is there?"

Clovis did his best, but his nimble antagonists kept so busy—a blow here and a tug there—and they, especially the fiddler, were so disgustingly merry all the while, that they had him half out of his clothes when a round, chubby little man came trotting up the street.

He paused a second to see what it all meant, and would have hurried on his way, thinking it was a common boy quarrel, but, noticing that they were two upon one, and that one was getting the worst of it, he was moved to remonstrate.

"What! What!" exclaimed he, "fair play now. You are too rough, by half!"

"Rough!" shouted Clovis, "they are thieves! They stole my money, last night, and now they are after my clothes!"

"Come, Fatty," said Bob, laughing loudly, "you

know that is a whopper—don't be mean 'cause you got licked. You see his back's kinder up, sir, 'cause I throwed him. Never mind, bub, you'll get the best of me some day."

While he was talking fast, and looking merry, Bob was pulling Clovis back into the coat he had been helping his partner to drag off a minute before.

"There, Fatty," he added, brushing and patting him, "don't be bilious. I guess you have got enough for this bout, but you shall have another chance next time you come down. Better trip up your little brother a few times first, so as to kinder get the hang of it, 'cause I don't reely want to hurt you.—Tell him to leave go, sir. I must lay down and laff."

The gentleman turned from one to the other, and noticing that Clovis used his fists while Bob fended him off, and that the third lad had ceased to meddle, and that one face was red with rage while the other was good-humored and jolly, he took the side of the pleasantest one, and tapped Clovis's shoulder quite smartly with his cane.

"Brawler," said he, "are'nt you ashamed to get in a passion over a bit of fun, and to make up a falsehood too out of revenge? You ought to think more of yourself than to be getting into fusses on the

street. I only hope you are not playing truant from school."

"I guess you don't know who you are blowing at. *You* may have boys that play truant ; my father hasn't."

"Upon my word, you are nobody's fool if you can't wrestle. On with your cap now, and let me see you start for home."

"How can I start when you are holding my arm ? Not but what I could jerk it away if I liked, but I wouldn't be so rude. There's *my* cap on that fiddler's head. I don't think anything of you, anyhow. Falsehood, indeed ! If I was as fat as you are, I would be polite. I wish you was a boy so I could lick you, insulting a perfect stranger with your truants and falsehoods."

"Bless me ! What a fast-talking boy, and such a remarkably forcible way of expressing himself ; but impudent, and bad temper, very. I believe you are right about the cap, though," added the gentleman, observing the incongruity of the handsome seal, cocked waggishly above the stroller's unkempt curls, and his dirty, rosy, mischievous face, all smut and dimples. He reached out his hand, thinking to pluck off the cap so plainly on the wrong pate, and with authority, to restore it to its obvious owner,

who wore the coat to match, but the nimble fiddler frisked out of plucking distance, kicking up his heels with such droll antics that he laughed in spite of his dignity ; and Clovis, angry as he felt, could not help an amused grin.

"Hi ! Look sharp," whispered Ben in his partner's ear, "here comes Charley—heave down the skimmer, and let's cut stick."

"There, sonny, 'taint no fun to fool with a cove that gets mad ; is it, sir ? Tell yer ma to buy you a stick of candy."

"Stop your gassin' and come on," wheezed Ben, "as likely as not he'll try to get us into trouble."

"Well, 'excuse haste and a bad pen,' as the pig said when he runned away from his sty," remarked Bob, as he shouldered his fiddle and followed the harper.

The policeman sauntered leisurely along the street, showing off his handsome face and figure before the servant-girls, and the instant Clovis caught sight of his official garb he sung out to him to hurry, as if it was possible for a policeman to hurry ! The stout little gentleman seemed to have got a new light on the affair as soon as the strollers edged off ; and he also beckoned the blue-coat to hasten his graceful approach.

"Police!" shouted Bob, as he was turning a corner, "take up that old gent! He's been a robbin' a bank."

"What is the row?" inquired the officer, putting his hand to his club. "Has the boy been doing anything? Wish to give him in charge? Oho," he added, starting back, "hillo, my fine fellar! You are the chap that was a lookin' for an uncle."

"I wish you were the policeman that was looking for rogues and catching them," retorted Clovis, hotly. "I might have got back my money, just now."

"I really almost fear that there *is* something wrong," said the stout gentleman, in a particular fidget; "hadn't you better secure this lad as a precautionary measure?"

"I'll take him up if you say so."

"You'll be mighty glad to set me down again, if you do. I am about my business, and that's more than I can say for some not-far away. I tell you once again, those two stole my money in the car, and you caught them trying to pull me out of my coat. What ails you that you can't see that I speak the truth?"

"Be respectful, boy, be respectful to your elders and betters; you may be right; quite likely they are a pair of rogues. Officer, keep a lookout for

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them ; let this be a lesson to you, young Impudence, not to pick up any more low acquaintances ; run right home. As for the money," he added, putting his hand in his pocket and pulling it out empty, "your father must attend to that ; take my advice ; you know what happened to poor Tray ?"

"Yes, sir. I've heard that he met with a little bald-headed, red-faced man who didn't know an honest dog from a sneak, and he bade him good-bye, and was glad to be rid of him as I am of you," muttered Clovis, as the gentleman trotted away.

Burying his hands in his pockets, the forlorn runaway leaned back against the railing, not knowing what better use to make of himself.

"Do you hanker after a room in my hotel, youngster?" asked the policeman, good-naturedly enough, but in the brusque tone he was accustomed to use toward children he wished to intimidate.

"Where is that ?" inquired Clovis, who was disgustedly examining his cap and shaking it.

"Yonder ! Says Station-House over the door."

"I'd go almost anywhere to get a good dinner."

"Look here ! What's your game, well-dressed little gentleman, hanging around, peeking into key-holes, trying door-knobs, pretending to be hungry, talking about being robbed ? If you don't quit, I shall

have to shut you up for a vagrant—that would be a pity !”

“So it would,” replied Clovis, “’specially as there are a couple of real rogues running loose you might occupy your attention with to good advantage. We have got a gilt rooster on the top of our barn that is more use than you are. Call yourself a policeman! Peuphf !”

“I ’most wish I had held on to that chap,” thought the officer, as Clovis left him ; “I believe he is on a switch-track and no signal light to warn him of danger ; smart, saucy, handsome fellar too—see him strut off like he owned the whole place.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW SILVER DOLLAR.



MEANWHILE, Clovis was wandering up the street. Wandering is a pleasant word enough when it describes a saunter through the leafy woods in summer, or a stroll in sweet-scented gardens by moonlight. Lovers wander hand in hand down green lanes, and

children wander by the singing brooks ; they rest when they are weary, and return home when they please ; but it is a terribly sad word when it means the progress of a friendless outsider in a wilderness of careless strangers.

He stopped often to gaze in at windows he passed, lighted and cheerful, some with plants and vines growing green, some with tea-tables set out—plenty of homes, but none for him. He lingered long where he could see through the lace curtains a stout man and a matron with children about them. His eyes saw *them*, but his mind was busy in a beautiful supper-room where his parents and his twin sister were assembled. They were probably thinking of him and, whatever the elders might do or say, he knew for certain that Clotilde mourned his absence, and he *believed* that his mother was sad and troubled.

“I wish I could be back into that old Christmas day again,” though he, with sharp regret, “and could live it all over, as it ought to be. I wish my father had not been so mean, and I had not acted so foolish : and so—so wicked ; then I shouldn’t be out here as hungry as a bear and as lonesome as that ragged girl over yonder.”

Something inside reasoned with Clovis, saying,

"Return ; beg pardon for your hasty mad words ; face your father's anger, and slip into your comforts and delights. It will take only a little humble repentance and all will be as if the Christmas had just dawned, and you were hearing Clotilde's sweet carol at your door."

"But how can I, when I haven't a dime to pay my way ? No, I have got to stick it out. If only I was not so starved !"

Just before him plodded wearily the small girl, and a great greasy flabby woman ; and he followed them till the girl crouched into a corner, and the woman sat down on an area step carelessly dropping into her lap a bundle she had been carrying, wrapped in a tattered old shawl. As the girl, a forlorn heap of rags, hugged her arms, and leaned against the iron railing which enclosed the grass-plot belonging to the tall mansion of brown stone towering above her, she shivered, but somehow Clovis knew that cold was not her only trouble. Her great hollow eyes were fastened in horror upon the thing resting on the woman's knees. She shrank away and cowered closer whenever the ugly hag moved, and shuddered if she but turned an eye toward her, vainly trying to suppress the hoarse, croupy cough, which racked her slender frame.

Clovis was so absorbed in her, and her looks and actions suggested such terrible things to him, that he did not see how greedily he was watched, and he started unpleasantly, when the old woman stuck out her lean hand like a vulture's claw, and in a thick whine begged a shilling for the love of his handsome eyes.

"A shilling," repeated he. "That is just what I have not got, and I don't know where to get it, either."

"To buy a sup of milk for me baby here," said she, snatching and snarling at the girl, who opened her mouth to cry out.

Her eyes were so red and watery, her teeth were so long and black, and the pimples on her nose were so purple, that Clovis involuntarily stepped out of her reach.

"I should like a good supper myself ; but I don't expect to have so much as a patticake. If I had a couple of dollars I'd buy something nice and hot for that poor thing," he added, half aloud. "I would, as sure as I am born."

All the girls of Clovis' set were plump and rosy. He could hardly remember one of them, cross or sorry, and he felt such pity for this poor wretched creature, that he would have suffered some sharp

torments to be able to lift her up on a plane with his friends in comfort and plenty. He could have denied himself, famished as he was, to be able to feed her.

Just then a carriage drew up to the curb-stone, and a lady reached forth a white hand and opened its door, her sparkling jewels glittered like stars in the gaslight.

Clovis' mother had a pretty hand, and wore diamonds.

One day Clotilde adorned her twin with all the chains, rings, brooches, and ear gems she found in a great casket. Mrs. Starbird kissed and fondled him, and said, "Huspunt, see the little rogue. It is King Clovis with the many fine things on him you read about. The regality on his head, and the sticktight on his finger, all he needs is a bow on his garter to make him just like a monarchy, and a great deal handsomer than the one in your fusty old picture." Why must that frolic come to the wanderer now, to make him sob and wipe his eyes?

The beggar fastened a coarse glance upon the shapely lady who stepped down in a trailing rich dress which swept the ground, wafting about her a soft sweet perfume.

A proud stately woman was she, of superb pres-

ence, as different from the other who eyed her as luxury from squallor, beauty from ugliness, the haunter of the streets, the dweller in dens, felt the sharp contrast. If she could have done her splendid sister a mischief! If she could have dragged her through the mire to her own filthy state! But having no power to spoil her superb face or smirch her good name, she snarled and made faces at the helpless child who was at her mercy.

"Up there, Blossom-bud, and beg. If you let her go in and get nothing, I'll fix you. Discharge your duty to your good old Gruffy; tell her the babby is sick, you know how. Do you hear me, Blossom-bud, *will* you stir?"

Cloyis gazed in anxious interest at the girl trying to harmonize the unctuous blandishment of her cuddling words with her fierce threatening eyes full of blood-shot streaks, her hideous mouth drawn into a malevolent and cruel smile, and her fingers making ready to tear and scratch.

He wondered if Blossom-bud could take her frightened look off the "babby," and if she would beg of the proud lady, if she would get money if she did, and what it would be for old Gruffy to "fix her" if she did not. A sickening apprehension of

tortures in store for that hapless creature, no larger than Clotilde, made his flesh creep.

As the lady was stepping-swiftly on, the beggar got up, after a couple of wheezy efforts, in time to reach her side. As soon as the bundle muffled in the shawl was no longer in her sight, little Blossombud dropped her tired eyes upon the ground, and sighed deeply.

The carriage madam paid no heed to the disgusting creature who approached her. She carried her head disdainfully, as if too high and haughty to bend or stoop to vulgar poor people, or feel interest or sympathy in their wants and woes. She was as graceful as she was beautiful, and her handsome clothes well became her.

She grasped by the hand a lovely child who had leaped after her from the coupé, and who pulled back, trying to get free that she might stop and examine that other child, so unlike her well-dressed and well-beloved self. But the mother would not permit her to loiter, and jerked impatiently the wrist she held, and so they mounted together the broad flight of steps, where the lady rang the bell as a mistress demands admittance to her home.

The disappointed beggar turned a hideous glare

upon the crouching thing within reach of her arm, which was a living creature capable of agony.

"You need freshening up a bit, Blossom-bud," said she; "you are sleepy, you are dreaming! I must waken you. Now, will the pretty bud blow and grow for her old Gruffy!"

She pinched little bits of the girl's thin arms while she talked, nipping them savagely, and she showed all her black teeth in wheezy mirth, as her victim's voice came through her blue lips in a pitiful wail, not loud, but full of misery.

"That's the tune, Blossom-bud! Keep it up! I knew you could pipe a little song in the ears of the scornful mistress that despises the poor."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" roared Clovis, quite out of his mind with indignation. "You horrid, cruel, disgusting old monster!"

The little Beauty was leaning over the stone lion, which guarded the entrance to her father's mansion, looking down upon the group below, while her mamma waited the opening of the door.

She heard the other child cry out, in her agony, and she heard Clovis' shout of remonstrance. She turned quickly, and, before her mother missed her, she had flitted down the steps, and stood close to the suffering she was so sorry for.

"What is the matter?" she asked, in her sweet singing voice. "Why do you weep so bitterly?"

"'Tis the terrible cold, little princess, and the sharp hunger. Poor Blossom-bud is starving; so are we all. May yer bonny face be always plump and ruddy, as ye pity the distresses of the needy. Me husband is lame, me babby is sick. I've the cramps meself——"

"Mamma! mamma, come quickly, and give money to this old woman, everything has happened to her. And listen, mamma, to the little girl; she cries and shivers, and she is not so big as me."

"Nonsense, Lilly! the idea of my going among those! absurd! You are a naughty thing to run off without permission. Leave them at once! Ah, what possesses you, rash child! don't touch her. Do you hear, Lily, don't touch her!"

"Give her some dollars, then, mamma; you have plenty in your purse, and speak kindly to her."

"Lily, you are wasting my time; unless we dine directly, you cannot go to see Jocko, the ape."

"Then I will stay. I had rather, than leave her so sorry. Come down, mamma, do come; it won't hinder you a minute."

"Oh, you obstinate magpie!" exclaimed the mother, as she unwillingly descended. You get your own way entirely too much. I shall have to make a stand; I really am not safe among your whims. Now, what are *you* haunting the streets for? because you do not choose to work? Here (tossing a handful of change at her)! I know I am throwing away the money—I have no patience with professional beggars. If I had my say, you would all be packed off where you came from. Go at once, or I will have you arrested; take your loathsomeness out of my sight. I desire to be able to leave my carriage without having every one of my senses shocked and offended. Go, I say!

"Now, Miss Lily, having gratified your curiosity, and coaxed me to seem to trouble myself with a wretched creature who does not deserve notice, perhaps you will graciously consent to go on before me, that I may be sure you don't fly off in some other tangent."

While old Gruffy gathered in the coins, which were sticking here and there in the tattered shawl, she never took her eyes off the gorgeous woman who so ungraciously bestowed them. She cursed her in her thoughts, while she smiled and ducked humbly. Old, ugly, depraved, she felt her foul-

ness in the presence of this dainty, scornful, prosperous one, who had never sinned, and she plucked at her dirty hood and sacque, longing to beat her to the earth, and trample out her beauty.

Still Lily loitered. "Just one minute, mamma. I want to give her my silver dollar for her own. I want to see her smile before I go. She's got nice eyes, though they are so sad and sorry."

"Very well ! give it, and be quick ; you are so fond of fancying angels under rags and tatters."

"I mean to care about such, as long as I live ; papa says I may."

She pulled from the silk pocket of her white fur cloak a rare purse of otter, bound with tiny golden bands, and clasped with a jewel, and taking out a bright new coin she put it into the cold hand, whose limp fingers she was forced to fold upon it with hers, rosy-tinted and soft and warm.

The two pairs of child eyes met in a quick glance, and it would be hard to say which were the more beautiful, though one face was fine and plump and dimpled, and set in a halo of flaxen curls, and the other pallid and worn, sharp with want and care. It would be harder to say which was the most blessed, the giver or the receiver, as they drank up each other's looks, shining with smiles.

"Mamma! mamma! I have found an angel, I am going to kiss her!"

"Lily Bell! Lily Bell, I say, how dare you disobey me! It may cost you your life to breathe the same air with that outcast! What hideous contagious disease may she not have?"

But it was too late, two pairs of arms were lifted and clasped around two little necks, and poverty and riches met in a quick embrace.

"I have cured her, mamma, she *was* sick for a child to love her; she is better now, perhaps I can make her quite well. Where do you live? what is your name?"

"I call her Blossom-bud, little princess; she is my dear Blossom-bud, my tender flower. She is fond of me. Tell the little princess how much you love your good old Gruffy."

Instinctively they all turned to the neglected miserable, stunted thing so bepraised, who began to shrink and cry as the hag edged closer to her.

"Oh, don't let her put it on me! she is going to make me hold it—don't let her—it's dead!"

"What is dead?" cried Lily; "tell me, hold fast to me. Oh, I wish papa was here!"

"The baby!" gasped the girl, cringing beneath old Gruffy's fist. "He is cold, he died a week ago!"

he is Pringle's young one, she keeps him in a box, and she makes me lie by it. I am afraid of the awful stiff baby! I feel it shivering all night in the dark. Oh, lady! oh! make her bury it, oh! oh!"

Clovis had stood back watching them all, admiring the little beauty's behavior, pitying the hapless girl who had experienced such horrors, in a maze of perplexed astonishment that such strange things could be possible in a world which had always swung around, full of merry days, and ever-recurring enjoyments for him.

A sudden impulse possessed him to seize upon the tattered shawl covering the bundle in old Gruffy's arms, and, with a swift spring, he clutched it, and dragged it down. There, sure enough, was a blue and livid corpse, with hanging jaw and blindly staring eyes,—the ghastly ugliness of neglected death, which the yellow flare of the gas-light made more sickeningly repulsive.

Gruffy rolled her wicked eyes from one to another of the group, who gazed at her as at some vile monster.

"Och hone! and is the speerit gone from me poor babby, unbeknownst, while I was seekin' a trifle to buy it a sup of milk! Gone widout a cross from the priest, or a dhrop of holy wather upon it.

Don't ye heed the lies of yon ungrateful beast, that I've housed and fed, and she niver a hole for her beggar's pate."

"This is too shocking," said Lily's mother, seizing her daughter's hand, "positively appalling. It makes me ill! I shall not recover from the effects upon my nervous system to-night! You have spoiled my evening with your perverse pertinacity. Come away! they have money! You *shall* come."

Quite a number of persons had already stopped about the group, the boys began to hoot and howl, and a man gave it as his opinion that a prison would be the proper place for the lot; and threatening looks, which were likely to be followed by actions, alarmed the beggar, who commenced hurriedly to back away from them all.

"Step along, wid ye," said she, grabbing at the girl's arm. "After the trouble ye're makin' fur me this blessed night. Augh! won't I murder ye when I get ye alone, teachin' ye to hauld yer tongue, if I lave any tongue in yer devil's head at all. An' as fer ye, ye witch's spawn, and yer cursed meddlin' fingers, ye'll need a locked house to keep yer curly head out of the reach of Gruffy's claws. I'll pay ye fur this night's work. Augh! curse ye all!"

The child seized fast hold of Clovis, who placed

himself between her and her enemy, and so clamorous were the crowd becoming that the hag began to fear for her own safety. But though she ceased her efforts to drag by force the creature whom it was dangerous to leave, she snatched and clawed at her unexpected champion in impotent rage, as she took to her heels, with the boys hooting and shouting after her, and in another minute Clovis was left under the street lamp, with a ragged stranger clinging to his arm.

With all his pity and sympathy, the contact was unpleasant, and his first impulse was to free himself, and, standing a few paces apart, they remained an instant, looking in each other's eyes, without speaking.

Accustomed to blows, she instinctively raised her hand, crooking her elbow before her face, and she peered at him from beneath it.

"I didn't mean to take hold of you, pretty boy, but you looked so kind; let me follow you to your home. I won't come no nigher; I'll walk behind, where you can't see me, only don't leave me."

"My home!" repeated Clovis, half ashamed of the repugnance he could not help feeling; "any place is better than by that dead baby! I cannot give you what I haven't got myself, and that is, a

shelter ; but you may stay if you want to. Put down your arm, I never struck a girl in my life ; I guess I sha'n't begin on you."

The proud lady had succeeded in drawing her daughter up the steps, but she resisted still, and pleaded for the poor children:

"Let her in, mamma ; let them both in ; give them some supper. Don't leave them out in the bitter cold."

"There ! they are going ! thank Heaven, we are rid of them at last. She proposed to him to go home—evidently they see that there is no chance of getting any more money—they all belong to the same gang. I don't understand what sort of a dreadful game they are playing. I don't want to think any more about them."

"But, mamma, the boy has on nice clothes. I don't believe——"

"I won't endure another word, Lily ! You exhaust my patience !"

"Good-bye, Blossom-bud ; good-bye, boy !" cried out Lily.

"Good-bye, silver dollar !" returned the girl, holding up the bright coin. "I have your kiss on my lips yet."

Both voices were sweet, though one was plain-

tive with pity, and the other full of tears—and then the hall-door, wick let out a wave of yellow comfort, enfolding the fortunate ones, shut with a clang, leaving Clovis and Blossom-bud in darkness and cold.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TIME TO WEEP, AND A TIME TO LAUGH.



UNNING away had ceased to be a pastime, but the position must be faced, and it was, with a queer sort of determined courage. But the lad accepted the situation.

"You seem to be left to me, Blossom-bud," said he, quite cheerfully. "All your friends have gone—rather queer! But such is the stubborn fact."

"I want to go with you," insisted she.

"I haven't a hole to put my head into, except the one in my fur cap, and there isn't any loose room over for anybody else. I have not a dime of money to buy a supper. I am not much of a protector, you'll find, as far as food and lodging go."

"Stop tellin' them lies," cried out the girl, draw-

ing back. "I know what you mean; you dassent show me to your folks; you are ashamed of my rags. Go along, I'll stop alone. I can't freeze to death but once, and that'll be to-night."

"You *are* are a little ragged, that is a fact," replied Clovis, "but you needn't mind. I don't know anybody—not a soul, so I sha'n't care. I might, if I was among my acquaintances. I'll do the best I can—that is nothing at all. If we can hold out till morning, I believe I shall find good luck. It rather looks as if we shall sleep on a door-step. You didn't want to go with old Gruffy—not a very good sounding name—but it fits her first-rate."

"I would have died sooner than follow her; you can't begin to think what she would do to me for telling about Pringle's baby. I am glad I told; I hope they caught her—then she will have to put it under the ground."

"I expect she was pretty mad, and she pinches like the mischief; I saw that. Is she your mother?"

"No, I never had no mother, nor Bob; he never had none; we lived on the farm, and weeded the carrits and the toemattys, and they said we was too big and must be put out, and old Gruffy she took us. She told them she kep a store, and would learn us how, but she didn't. She made us beg for cold

pieces, and Rob got lost. He hated old Gruffy, and he used to whisper to me how he'd like to smash her all to bits, and one day he didn't come back, and she said I knew where he was, and she forced me to swallow horrid stuff that made me so sick I thought I should die. She said Blossom-bud was dumb and must be doctored !"

"Did you know?"

"No, I didn't; I seen him a talkin' with a man that had a fiddle. I heard him say he wanted to learn to play music on it, and very quick and sharp he said, 'You run on, Fruzzletop; I ain't goin' to get no more cold pieces;' and then he went off and didn't look behind him, not once. I was sorry after Bob; he was funny he made me laff, and when he boned anything good, he gave me some. Once I had a whole chicken: do you like chicken, pretty boy?"

"Don't mention anything to eat," exclaimed Clovis. "I can't stand the thought! I am too awfully famished!"

"Did you say true when you told me you hadn't got no folks nor no home?" inquired the girl, as they walked slowly and aimlessly on.

"I have plenty of folks; I *had* a home."

"Where?"

"Oh, away off"—Clovis waved his hand so vaguely as to give an idea of indefinite space.

"Why are you here, alone?"

"I've run away, that's why."

"You have! run away from home! from your mother!" whispered Blossom-bud, fixing sad, wistful eyes on her companion's face, "oh, pretty boy! how could you?"

"I ran away from my father, but I don't want to talk about it. How old are you?"

"I don't presackly know. I expect I'm fifteen. Bob said he was fifteen, and he was just as old as me—oh! oh! oh! how bad that makes me feel!"

"What does?"

"To think you've run away from your mother. I know what mothers is—I've seen 'em often. I saw Silver-dollar's mother."

"I don't think much of *her*. Mine is quite different. Mine would never have shut the door on anybody. Mine never scolds."

"And you left her! I wish I could see your mother. Have you got any sisters?"

"One."

"Was you good to her?"

"Of course; she is my twin."

"I know what a twin is—two things that looks

presackly alike and grows tight together; I seen twin toemattys on the farm. Your sister, she's a stunner, ain't she? sprigged and trigged to kill."

"How funny you do talk for a girl!" exclaimed Clovis, laughing; "I did not know that the feminine gender used such words; and your voice sounds as sweet and fine as *theirs*, too—except that you've got such a bad cough: but you are not much on grammar, are you?"

"Don't poke fun at me, pretty boy, or I shall get mad. I had rather you left me, if you can't keep from it. I never had no chance!"

"Oh! Blossom-bud, I did not mean to hurt your feelings, I should be very lonesome without you."

"How nice it sounds when *you* call me that. Old Gruffy said it, in folks' hearin', to make believe she owned me. I hated it in her mouth; now I like it. I like you. Take my silver-dollar—I want you to have a good supper; I know a bumptious place to buy tripe, and when we have eat it we will go and sleep where there is a hot fire."

"Mrs. Gruffy's?"

"Not muchy. I found it out along of her, though; what if she should be there! Oh pretty boy, what if she had got in, all ready to grab me! She said she'd cut out my tongue for telling on her!"

"Nonsense! I wouldn't let her do any such horrid thing. Where is the place?"

"Onto the ferry-boat."

"Ferry-boat?" repeated Clovis.

"Yes—the house that runs on the river, you know. I tell you it's warm! I've stopped a many nights on it. You see we will pay six cents of our money, and we will snuggle down behind the stove. It just bakes you through and through, and we can ride backwards and forwards till morning if the cross old peeler don't come round, and drive us off. Won't it feel bully to be warm?"

Although the child took the shortest road she knew, it was a wearisome journey. They went into the first under-ground eating-place they found, and bought a couple of plates of tripe and a square of bread, which they devoured with the intense relish famine gives to the coarsest fare, and sopped up the last drop of the gravy.

"I never tasted anything so good as that stuff in my whole life," exclaimed Clovis. "What is it?"

"*She* calls it tripe, but that ain't no sign that's its name. She calls me Blossom-bud, but I guess I never growed in no flower-bed. Hurry, pretty boy! this is the ferry; put your three cents in that little hole."

Clovis did as she advised, and then they walked on through a long alley, roofed in, which appeared to him to be a part of the office.

"How do you get aboard?" asked, he looking about.

"Why, we are on now," answered the girl, while a sudden smile, vivid and fleeting as the heat lighting from a summer cloud at evening, played over her wan features, such a quick illumination as to startle with its possibilities of beauty and joy: "don't you feel her go?"

A snort, like a leviathan taking breath, a heave, a surge, a rattling of ropes and chains, then a swish, swish of water over the wheel, and Clovis knew that they were moving.

"Come ahead," whispered the girl, after a swift survey of the passengers. "I didn't know but she was skulking. I thought I heard her breathe, but we are safe. I guess they chased her, and scaret her, so she went and hid up, and got drunk. My! ain't I glad I ain't there; she's awful when she's drunk. Hurry! let's get good places afore they are all squeezed full."

Worming their way among the crowd, they dodged through into a square cabin, where a great stove made good Blossom-bud's promise; it was

red hot. Around it were gathered sodden creatures, stolid with hard living, uncanny shapes, bloated features, bleared eyes, reeking breaths, deformity ; rags and filth, diffusing an atmosphere of greasy, rank odors—they were huddled together as strange, wild animals will herd in caves during a tempest. Each dangerous, savage, preying on everything weaker, but all, just now, quiet with a common torpor, peaceable in the warmth which comforted their chilled bodies.

Up and down, back and forth, the boat kept plying, ringing its bells, clanking its chains and dashing its great wheel through the black water. Once in a while the peeler, as the girl called him, came through and routed out some of the men, and a couple of children were pushed off, whimpering, into the cold.


For some time Blossom-bud peered anxiously among the new-comers, with dread and fear ; but at length her weary head dropped upon her breast, and she slept.

Clovis, after a look at her wan face, put an arm around her, and kindly drew her to him, while tears welled up in his eyes, as he recalled the dainty beauty who had flitted down, of her own sweet will, like a white dove, and kissed the pale cheek so close to

his. He thought of his twin, Clotilde, who was also full of tender pity for the unfortunate, and how both were safe in their luxurious homes, while he was so rudely neighbored ; all he had abandoned in his foolish passion, all he might encounter in his future, kept his thoughts painfully busy, and he resolved, whatever he encountered, never to disgrace his family by any wickedness. Finally he forgot his griefs, and remembered his miseries no more—and his dreams must have been pleasanter than his waking thoughts, for he smiled as he slept.

CHAPTER IX.

LILY'S PHILANTHROPIST.

“ HANKS to your daughter's obstinacy, and disobedient persistence in a most ridiculous whim, we are late,” said Mrs. Bell, as she seated herself at table ; “and I detest being late at dinner as much as I do at church or the theater.”

“What was it this time, Lily ; a stray kitten or a persecuted puppy ?”

"Oh no, papa, it was dreadful things which happened to a poor girl!"

Lily began to relate the occurrences of the evening, and she might have got on much faster, had she not been so frequently interrupted with undervaluing and contemptuous comments.

"I shall call your whim a sweet and gentle charity," said Mr. Bell, when at last she finished.

Mr. Bell was habitually genial and chatty, but on this evening he was expansive; he had just returned from a long, tedious journey, and his charming home seemed to him extremely enjoyable; his wife unusually handsome and superb.

His little daughter's story interested him amazingly, and he began to tell her about a boy whose fare he paid, who was robbed by some wicked young strollers.

Lily eagerly drank in the tale, and she asked a great many questions, in spite of her mother's sneering disdain.

"Oh, papa! it is so nice to have you go away—no, I mean to have you come back from away, because you tell me things I love to hear. Was he handsome, papa?"

"Pretty fair, as boys go—might be a trifle frequented, but he had bright, fearless ways."

"How was he dressed?"

"Like any other lad, in a coat and trousers. I think he wore a fur cap."

"And they stole all his money? How mean! but you gave him some more, papa?"

"No, Lily; he was going to his uncle."

"What if he should get lost, papa?"

"I have thought of that, myself," answered Mr. Bell, rather uneasily. The fact that he had permitted an inexperienced youngster to slip through his hands too carelessly, had already obtruded itself upon him with disgusting persistence; "I might have held on to him, it would have been inconvenient; but I could have done it. I don't suppose there is any danger, I gave him my card, and told him to come to my store; he will come, because I lent him money. Unless I mistake, he is of the sort who pay; if he did get into any mischief—well, it is too late now."

"I feel very bad about him, papa. I almost know he is in trouble. Oh, why didn't you bring him home. I like boys!"

"That is natural, too, pet. You would enjoy a play-fellow; such a tiny birdie in a great comfortable nest! There is room enough for a good boy. I wish he was here!"

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Mrs. Bell, with her chin up, "you are a choice pair. Perhaps you would have let her invite in that wretched creature she made such a fuss over to-night. To think of *my* daughter kissing a beggar! I absolutely feel as if she would never be fit to touch again after such a squeeze of that bundle of rags and dirt—augh! I shudder."

"And yet she looks as pure as the Lily we call her. The truth is, Arabella, we have intrusted to us a natural philanthropist; let us be careful not to scoff at her good impulses."

"A what, papa?" asked Lily, looking up earnestly, while she held a grape within an inch of her red lips till he should answer, as if she was afraid to take in knowledge and grapes at the same time.

"A philanthropist, birdie, is a person who wishes to do good to others, who thinks more about comforting those who need comfort than coddling himself."

"Spell your long word, please, papa!"

Lily looked very pretty in her attitude of pleased attention, and she laughed when he had finished.

"I think I have got it all, now. I'll put it at Miss Squelcher to-morrow, papa; I think it means me a little, it would have meant you a great deal if you

had taken better care of your freckled boy in the fur cap."

"That is as true as you live, birdie," said Mr. Bell, regretfully.

Nothing more was said for a minute, and while Lily crushed the pulp from her hamburg on her white teeth, the father and mother watched her with widely diverse feelings. Pretty soon she held up the half-eaten bunch in her fingers.

"See!" said she, "how large they are! how ripe, how sweet! I wish your boy had some, or my poor little girl. I cannot possibly eat any more."

Mr. Bell laughed. "Philanthropists don't fill themselves full of the good things of the world before they think to be generous; they go out into the highways and hedges, they seek and find the sick and hungry, and they minister to them."

"I think I understand you, papa; I should like to help somebody. Tell me how. If I knew where to find the ones I saw to-night——"

"Let us be thankful that you do not," spoke up Mrs. Bell, shrugging her handsome shoulders. "I shall be only too glad if you have not already caught measles or small-pox; those low creatures are capable of anything."

"Yes, of loving, mamma, and starving. I am

sorry you were displeased, but I could not help it. If you was a poor beggar shouldn't you like to be kissed?"

"Mr. Bell! how can you applaud such absurd nonsense? That child is really getting so morbid that I no longer enjoy taking her on the street. She wants to stop and pity every little wretch she meets; she is always fancying the disgusting things are ill treated; at her age, too! when she ought to be cultivating acquaintance with the Belmonts and Bienvenues; interested in her dancing and accomplishments. I declare she annoys me beyond endurance. Only yesterday she said, 'I don't see why children should suffer. If I was God, I would soon stop all that.' So you perceive that you are encouraging your child to be wicked, Mr. Bell! yes, impious, Mr. Bell!"

Mr. Bell sat silent under this rebuke, his eyes wistfully fastened upon his darling, whose disturbed, puzzled face suggested possibilities of struggle and conflict in the life he so plainly understood to be marked out for her, by his ambitious wife, and after he was left alone he went on thinking with solemn, troubled fixedness.

Mrs. Bell was still engaged with her elaborate toilette, when Lily hurried from Miss Squelcher,

and running down stairs, she found her papa with his hands clasped around his knee, and so absorbed and sober, that she paused in the door-way, hardly daring to interrupt him. As soon as he heard her, he looked up, and opened his arms with a smile of welcome.

"Come, Birdie, fly right in here to your nest."

"Papa, what do children do who have no nest, like those two? The boy was kind; he took hold of her hand; mamma said he was one of their gang, but he was not. He was a gentleman. His face was as clean as mine, and his hair curled. Why, papa, he must have been a philanthopist!"

"Possibly, pet," answered Mr. Bell, shaking his head; "but nice boys are not likely to take up with beggars. I expect your mother is right; he must be of their lot."

"Wouldn't your freckled boy have done so?"

Mr. Bell smiled, as he recalled Clovis' anger and threats against the strollers. "The truth is, Lily," explained he, "boys are naturally indifferent to suffering, or they are absolutely cruel in their instincts; decency and gentleness have to be educated into boys. That youngster was not coarse or common; he knows how to behave."

"So does mine, papa; he is surely such as we,

and he is kind. He took hold of the girl's hand softly, and he smiled. He said 'Come along, till we'—I couldn't hear the rest, mamma called me so. I hope his mother is a philanthropist. Are ladies ever that, papa?"

"I suppose such cases have been known," replied Mr. Bell, drily; "but not many have come under my immediate notice."

"Well, if she should be, and should have the little girl washed and dressed, and give her a good supper, then she might sit in a rocking-chair by the fire, and the boy might draw some pictures and tell some stories, and she would look glad. She is very pretty when she looks glad. She was pretty when I kissed her. It did not hurt me to hug her, did it, papa? My mouth is just as sweet, isn't it, papa?"

Fondly, almost reverently, Mr. Bell touched the red lips offered him.

"He was a real pretty boy," Lily went on, still full of interest in her subject. "His eyes were big, and full of fire, and he had on a fur cap, and a blue silk scarf, twisted around his neck, and I'll tell you what he said, I couldn't help remembering it, he roared it out so loud, when the girl cried. He said, 'I vow, I wouldn't treat a dog so!'"

"Hello, Lily! that's my boy! Can it be possible

that he is consorting with beggars! Tut, tut! It looks bad. Let me consider," Mr. Bell went on, thinking, and drumming on his chair till his splendid wife swept in, and demanded his escort to the play.

CHAPTER X.

MOTHER BUNCH IN HER HUT.



HE gray dawn was breaking when Clovis and his charge left the old boat, sighing and groaning under its burdens of discomfort, crime and poverty. They stopped a moment to watch the people listlessly crawling away.

There was a long line of yellow light above the horizon, and the sombre clouds began to be flecked with purple and crimson, the wind blew sharp and fresh across the bay, the sea sobbed and moaned around the wicked rocks out yonder, where the lighthouse gleamed like a star, and the cruel waves lapsed and flowed sluggishly indifferent, ready to devour, where the black, slimy piles skirted the shore.

The smoke and roar of the awaking city was behind them, and close around, the dwellings of those who spent their strength in purveying to its needs, and the two were jostled by a crowd of market-people, clerks and workmen, scurrying on in pursuit of daily bread.

"I vow!" exclaimed Clovis, "it seems as of yesterday was a thousand years ago."

They were stopping before an old shanty which stood back in a little yard, as if it was in hiding, and had been forgotten; walled around by tall founderies, warehouses and breweries, while tall factory-chimneys puffed high above it, it was falling to decay at its leisure.

A neatly dressed old woman was trying to break the ice in a hogshead, which half-buried in a corner, drew down by a primitive trough, the rain-water for her use. The night had been so cold that she was forced to put all her strength to the hatchet, and she sent the frost-splinters flying like a small hail-storm.

They watched her at her task until she filled her bucket, and wiped her face on the hem of her clean checked apron.

"I like *her* looks," whispered Clovis. "She is something of a woman, solid and comfortable, none

of your Gruffy sort. If *she* had a room where she could keep you safe from that old she-dragon, wouldn't it be gay?"

The wanderers had been discussing their prospects, as they trudged over the snow, and had already made the sudden jump into confidential intimacy which young people are capable of. Now, however, the girl fastened her eyes, bright with alarm, upon her companion's face.

"You won't leave me, pretty boy!" she exclaimed, unconsciously gripping closer the hand she held.

If Clovis Starbird, son of the great merchant of Roaring River, had met one of his genteel friends, —Dick Walsingham, for instance,—leading a dirty beggar along the street, he would have been much astonished ; but it seemed quite natural that Blossom-bud should cling to him, and that he should let her. He had taken a tremendous stride toward manhood since he parted from his life-long associations, though only a boy still. And he replied to her question with a degree of dignity which might have served the minister in his pulpit of a Sunday.

"I shall work, and earn money for us both. What do you take me for?"

"Bob left me."

"I am none of your Bobs ! I am a gentleman ; but I forgive you, because you can't be expected all at once to understand the difference between me and him. After you learn, you will know."

Quite abashed and humble, she kept silence while he further instructed her.

"I am going to state our case," said he ; "you keep still."

"Yes, pretty boy," answered she, stepping obediently backward.

"Good morning, ma'am ! Pretty cold weather to make such thick ice. I was just going to offer to chop the stuff when you struck water ; hard work for such an old lady. Don't you want a smart boy to do it for you ?"

"Lord love you, young master, your mother has got a pert one, sure enough. I haven't a chick nor a child. I had a promisin' lad, once, but he is at the bottom of the sea."

"Take me in his place. I want a nice old woman to live with. Is this your house ?"

"Such as it is, and poor enough ; shaky and shivery in these hard times that freeze old bones. Pray, what is the likes of you a doin' abroad this early of a mornin' ?"

"I am hunting for a good matron, and I think I

have found one. I want a safe place to put this girl. Let her have a room, and I'll pay you. I will, indeed."

"A room! what should a young gentleman want with a room in my poor place?" said the dame, suspiciously scanning the ill-assorted couple.

"For her. She's got no home, she has an enemy. I am going to take care of her."

"An enemy, has she? Look out, you might be her worst one. If you mean fair and honest, why don't you take her to your home? It should be a rare fine one by the clothes you wear. No, no, go along! I've no quarters for such!"

The beauty of the lad pleased her, though she looked at him askance, and shook her head.

"But I am not 'such,'" spoke up Clovis, impatiently. "I am a good boy; I never did a mean thing in my life, and I never will. It is necessary for me to find a shelter for her, somewhere, and if you have got half the heart that ought to go with your face, I'll put her here. You just said you had no children."

"No more have I," sighed the dame.

"Then take us. Look at me, am I not nice; look at her, don't she need a mother?"

"Aye, she do ; and she'd not be ugly if her face was clean. I can't abide dirty young ones."

"Mother Bunch, good mother Bunch, I've got a picture that looks just like you ; and that is her name. You don't mind my calling you so ?"

"I hate sassy young ones, worse nor dirty ones," replied the dame ; but she twinkled her eyes at Clovis, and did not seem displeased.

"I hate them both alike, Mother Bunch ; but let me tell you, some of that water you have drawn is the very article to show us the natural color of her cheeks. I should like to see it myself ; and if there's too little, I'll haul up some more. Come, be good-natured, and let us stop. How much will you feed us both for ?"

"Have you got plenty of money ?"

"I have a very little, that was given to her. But I will have plenty, when I earn it."

"Just as I thought," said the dame, turning her back ; "a couple of rogues. You are up to some mischief ; I'll have naught to do with it."

"Indeed, we are in sober earnest, *dead* earnest, it may be, if you are unkind. Is that a rogue's face ?"

Clovis went close up to her, and lifted his eyes to hers.

"A leetle roguish, I must declare," replied she, after a look, in which admiration for his boyish beauty mingled with astonishment at his strange demand. "A little roguish, but not bad."


Clovis bore her scrutiny with solemn countenance as long as he could, before he burst into a merry laugh, that rippled and dimpled all over his ruddy, freckled cheeks, which not even the night he had passed could blanch of their healthy color.

The dame tried to be grave and severe, but it was of no use ; she gave it up, and joined him, and Blossom-bud's lips parted in a smile, as fleeting as a cloud-shadow, and which left her sad mouth sadder than ever.

This the dame observed, and her curiosity and distrust began to merge into sympathy, accustomed, as she was, to daily sights of childish misery.

"I thought you would be persuaded," exclaimed Clovis. "Look here ! you may have this, to make you feel quite safe and certain that I am honest. How queer that anybody should ever dare dream that I could be bad ! Keep it till I fetch you the first money I earn. I will go right to work, to-day."

Clovis pulled out his handsome watch, a birth-

day gift from his mother. . He could not keep  own a little sigh as he let it out of his hand, and he made haste to huddle it, chain and all, into the wrinkled palm of the dame, lest his courage should fail.

"There ! now you know I am all right. You have good security !"

She turned it over and looked at it, and at its owner, whose little struggle and victory she guessed, and a vision of a bright sailor-lad arose in his place with bronzed cheeks and frank eyes : and it was a pile of money he had earned which she was holding, and a dear familiar voice seemed to sound in her ears:

"Good bye, mother ! Kiss me before I go, and pray for me till I come back."

She had never ceased to pray, but she never kissed her son again.

"Don't you know it?" said Clovis, impatiently, breaking in upon her memories, and bringing her back to now ; "don't you know it, mother Bunch?"

"I know you are out of your proper place. I know it surer than ever. I know somebody would feel bad to see this in my old paw. Look at me ! You haven't no business with a ragged, dirty little streeter ! I won't talk another word if you don't tell me what it means ! Who are you ? Where do

you? What brought you to my door, when you ought to be a huggin' of your ma this very minute, and a eatin' of your nice breakfast."

"You have strung a lot of questions on this string, mother Bunch. I can't begin such a long story out here in the cold. See how blue she is! and you are shivering yourself. Let us in by your fire, and I'll tell you all you want to know; in fact, I should like to tell you."

"Well, do come along. You would wheedle the song out of the merle's throat, with your coixin' looks. A short stop inside my hut can't do any hurt, but mind, no yarns, I can't abide liars. You must speak truth. If you go to fib, I shall feel it in my bones. I live all alone. I don't mind company of a while. You may stay till I lock up."

So saying, the dame lifted her bucket, but she was not permitted to carry it, Clovis being far too well-bred a lad to go empty-handed, while she tugged a burden. His ready offer of help, so graceful and natural, pleased the dame, and she smiled such a broad smile, that the fine wrinkles cris-crossed her face into map-work.

CHAPTER XI.

BLOSSOM-BUD BECOMES A HOUSEKEEPER.



T was a bit of a place, old, and brown, and rickety, but as soon as she lifted the latch and let them step over the threshold they felt that it was a home.

A door opposite the one by which they entered, looked out upon the sparkling bay, restless and ever-changing, and beneath the morning sun, the waters took on beautiful colors ; blue, and green, and violet. In a small yard, enclosed by a rude fence, which props and stakes could hardly hold upright, were the remains of garden-beds, with cabbage-stumps and withered sprouts above the snow, and dead vines still clung to strings about the windows, waving in the breeze, and fluttering their dried leaves, which must have made a gay curtain in their blooming time.

A clean stove with a bright copper kettle atop, a couple of straight-backed chairs, a pine table and a sailor-chest were the furniture, but in a corner stood a stand which asserted its importance, as the piece most beloved and valued by the owner.

It was claw-footed and fluted legged. It shone with age and much polish, and on it reposed an ancient Bible, neighbored by an old Methodist hymn-book, well thumbed and worn, which was held open by a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles, at these comforting words :

“ Oh God, our strength in ages past ;
Our hope in years to come.”

Only a single room, with a high-heaped feather bed on one side covered with a bright patchwork quilt, and a mat of braided rags spread before it. The dame's breakfast was frugally laid out, and the earthen teapot sent forth a fragrant steam. A piping bulfinch was singing all he knew of “ Blue-eyed Mary,” and he went over and over his one tune with much ardor, as he heard the fresh young voices in the quiet place unused to such blithe music.

“ Well done, Christopher !” said the dame, approvingly ; “ that is a welcome for you two. He is glad to look down upon a pair of small faces, even if one of them is dirty !”

“ You sha'n't say that to me twice more, if you will show me where I may wash it,” replied Blossom-bud.

"I'll soon do that, smutty cheeks. What a mop of hair! I wonder if it can be made smooth."

Blossom-bud began hurriedly to draw her fingers through her tangled mat of curls, and Clovis unconsciously followed her contortions of feature with close imitations.

"Oh mercy! don't do that any more," said he presently. "I have nearly twisted my jaw out of joint; now here, try this!"

He presented her with a pocket comb, but, after a few frantic jerks, some suffering gasps, and frightful faces, she gave it up as hopeless.

"I can't get it into them, pretty boy," said she; "I'll go behind the door and scratch and claw it a bit first. I never had no comb. Old Gruffy wouldn't let me clear it out much. She said beggars mustn't look fine, or nobody would feel sorry!"

When she returned from her scrub, where she had not spared the dame's yellow soap, she looked so different, that Clovis could not leave gazing at her.

"I expect I am hid up in such a clean face," said she, "that old brimstone beauty (that's what Bob called her), wouldn't hardly know me. I hope she won't get a chance to try. I am on my own hook

after this. I'll holler things on the corners : Matches ? Matches ! only three cents a box !"

Clovis retreated suddenly from her, and clapped his hand over his ear.

"Can't I toot up a loud music ?" asked she, complacently. "I'll make money—and at night we will count it, and Mother Bunch will keep it for us—and as soon as I have enough, I'll buy flowers—won't that be nice ! to sell pretty smelling flowers ?"

"Not so fast, not so fast, young ones. No wickedness in hiding from me. No undutiful son—I must see my way very clear. I must know the whole truth."

"Let *me* talk a little," said Blossom-bud, humbly. "Let *me* tell Mother Bunch. I am a farm child ; old Gruffy took me and Bob away from that place. Bob got lost, and now I've got lost, and I don't mean never to get found no more, not if I have to jump into the river. Pretty boy, he got lost, too ; but he'll get found," she added, looking wistfully at Clovis. "I know he will, he is not such as me ; he is high, and I am low. He was good to me ; he let me hold his hand. I love him ! When he goes away to his grand folks, I'll be here with you Mother Bunch, won't I ? You will let me stay there won't you ?"

The door of the dame's heart was already ajar,

and it opened wider and wider, as Blossom-bud went on with the story of her street life, and she held up her hands in horror when she heard of the dead baby.

"The massy me ! exclaimed she ; "such a beast! I wonder the good Lord lets her live. But I reckon He knows what to do with her."

"You will keep me, won't you, Mother Bunch ? I won't cost you nothin'. I'll earn money."

"I can't promise for certain, but I'll think on't," replied the dame, cautiously. "It depends entirely on how you turn out. Now, young master, what have you to tell ?"

"First, and foremost, I have run away from home. I cannot go back. I have no money. I will not go, because I do not wish to be jeered at, as the fellow that couldn't take care of number one after he undertook the job and was glad to sneak back with his fingers in his mouth. I've done plenty of thinking lately, and my mind's made up. I'm going right ahead on this road. I shall not tell you where I came from, but you will find I am a gentleman. My dad used to say, 'Clovis, you've got a king's name ; be a king among men.' I'm going to. I feel pretty certain you will be a dear old woman, and not send us away—give us a trial, anyhow !"

"But, my precious boy, you don't know what it is to look for work ; last week a soldier died over there, starved ! He only weighed sixty pounds ! He tried hard to live, and they wouldn't let him. You might hunt a month and never get a single job. *Won't* you go to your ma ?"

"No—not now ; some time, perhaps, but I have put myself into this fix, and I'll stand it ; and I won't whine either !"

"Sell your beautiful watch. Your folks will be glad enough to buy you another for the sake of having their son again. I know how a mother's heart feels," persisted she.

"I am nearly sure that my father had rather I stayed away. Under the circumstances, I believe he would despise me for a coward. I should despise myself, anyhow. I'll keep my watch, too. You don't suppose I want to put my mother clear out of my head, do you ? Don't talk any more. If you are set against taking us in, we may as well start !"

"Hoity toity ! young master. I guess you have a temper of your own, but this is no time to show it. I sha'n't turn you upon the street. I should kinder hate to lose sight of you ; and as for the girl, well, I'll hold on to your watch, cause you might lose it,

as you did your money. Let me think ! there's the garret, a dreadful poor place—come up and see !”

It was only a loft under the roof, lighted by a small window. When Blossom-bud pulled open the sash and peeped out, she uttered a scream of delight ; the beautiful sparkling bay, dotted with white sails ; the great black ships, lying like huge sea-monsters asleep ; the steam and smoke of the puffing ferries curling gracefully up and in soft clouds ; and beyond, the distant light-house, around which the sea gulls were whirling and dipping, made such a charming picture.

“Oh, Mother Bunch !” exclaimed she, seizing one of the dame's wrinkled hands. “She could never find me up here. Tell me what I can do for you. Oh, how good to have a home—a room that I can sweep and tidy up every day. Think of that, pretty boy ; maybe after a while I'll be as clean as Silver-dollar.”

“I cannot spare any more time,” replied the dame. “I must eat my breakfast, and get to my work. I dare say you are hungry.”

“We can pay for our breakfast,” said Clovis, producing the change he had left from Lily Bell's gift.

“Never mind, lad ; you are company to-day.

Sit down and shut your eyes, I am going to say grace."

Clovis dropped his head, reverently, while the dame asked for a blessing upon the children sent to her table, and the girl gazed at them both in wonder, when they said "Amen."

"Mother Bunch," asked she, in a low voice, "who are you talking to, when you don't see anybody?"

"I pray to God."

The dame's solemn voice impressed Blossom-bud, and she felt as if she must not ask any more questions; but her face reflected the gravity in the wrinkled old one before her.

"I clearly understand," thought Mother Bunch, "that I may do a good work here; perhaps it will be given me to save a soul. Now, that you belong to my family," she said, smiling, "you must tell me your names."

"She is a Blossom," answered Clovis, laughing, "and I seem to be the stick that is cut off and sharpened to support her."

"Old Gruffy stuck that name onto me, to make folks think she was fond of me. I hated it, till pretty boy spoke it, now I like it. I had some other ones; at the farm they called me 'frizzle-top,' and

'mophead,' and 'bag of bones.' Now I will always be Blossom-bud."

"I should think Betsey, or Jane, or Sally would sound more human," said the dame.

"No! no, no! I will be what pretty boy calls me. I will not be those," answered the girl, shaking her shoulders and frowning.

"All right, child, but you must not commence with being cross, or you and me'll be bad friends," answered the dame, very soberly.

"Cross! oh, no; old Gruffy was cross. I don't want to be like old Gruffy. I want to be like good Mother Bunch."

"You can be cunning, I see, poor child. No wonder either, with the life you've led. If only there is nothing worse to fight," thought the good old woman, looking at the girl's earnest face. "Well! well!" she added aloud, "it will be a many years, and a power of hard knocks that'll make you like me. You may each have one more doughnut, and then we are finished. I must go to my stand. I sell apples and cakes, on the corner by St. Paul's. What ever am I to do with you two? I feel family cares already."

"I shall start right off on my business," said

Clovis, with an important air, "she can stop here by herself, I suppose."

"I don't know whether I had better trust her all day; she might burn the house up."

"Oh I won't! Do trust me; it will be so nice to be in a room with a stove, and a warm fire. I won't touch anything. I am honest. Old Gruffy never could make me steal."

"But you must be busy. Satan finds work for idle hands. You can wash the dishes, and then you may string these red berries. My boy brought them from beyond the sea. I make moss pictures, and sell them to ladies. I'll show you how, if you please me."

"Am I clean enough to kiss you, Mother Bunch?" asked Blossom-bud, coaxingly, going close up to the old lady, and looking into her eyes.

She got a hearty hug for all her rags, and she turned, half eagerly, half ashamed, to Clovis: "And you, pretty boy?" added she.

"I am not much of a kisser," said Clovis, "but I'll salute you, as they do in novels. I guess I hav'n't acted in charades and tableaux for nothing!"

He took her thin fingers in his, and put them to his lips, with such boyish grace, that the old dame quite admired the action, and as for Blossom-bud, it

seemed so wonderfully charming that she could not leave off thinking about it, and after they had left her, she sat by the fire holding the hand close-clasped in its fellow so long that she fell asleep, and dreamed of Silver-dollar and Pretty Boy, and so many delightful things happened, that when she awoke and found herself curled up in the dame's chair, and knew that she was safe and warm, her heart was full of grateful joy, and she sang so loud and so sweetly that the old bulfinch made haste to join her.



CHAPTER XII.

WELL BEGUN IS HALF DONE.



OTHER BUNCH and Clovis crossed the ferry together, mingling with the restless activity of traffic, which jostled and elbowed toward the great city.

He carried the heaviest basket, and though his arm ached when he reached her stand, he was inspired by hope and courage, and he assisted her in placing her wares, throwing in plenty of pranks and fun, which puckered her wrinkles into laughter, before

he left her, to hunt the store of Wolfe, Lamb & Co.

The breath of the morning-wind on his cheeks, and the help he had just been able to give one who had helped him, refreshed and strengthened his purpose to be brave and steady in the strange life into which he had fallen.

As he walked briskly on, he thought over his queer experiences, and he laughed aloud as he wondered what Dick and the others would say to his adventures. He began unconsciously to fit his story into the words he would use in relating it, in the *sometime*, when, having achieved a fortune, he would return to Roaring River.

Suddenly he remembered poor Mr. Dupres and his fifteen dollars.

"Clovis," exclaimed he, stopping short, "you are a defaulter!" (Any American boy who reads the newspapers knows the meaning of *that* word.) "Your father will think you are using that money. He believes you a thief! I'll do it! if I freeze! I will, by jingo! Straight-forward is the best runner. Dad always told me so. I'll act up to his rules, if he did throw my skates in the fire!"

He was so earnest in his resolve, that he punctuated it with a back step, as he knocked his fist into

his palm, which brought him in lively contact with a policeman, who paraded his beat with the easy saunter so characteristic of those gentlemen of elegant leisure.

"What are you about, bub?" inquired the officer, in a tone of good-natured respect for the handsome outside of the heavy-footed youngster. "Isn't there room enough on the walk for you to play hopscotch without jumping on a man's best corn?"

"Hillo!" cried Clovis, facing him, "here you are again!"

"Yes; the same to you. What is the game this time? Are you hunting another uncle?"

"Not at present!" replied Clovis, laughing. "Uncle Zoar was such a disappointment, that I have dropped all family claims. I am about to negotiate a loan. Oh, you needn't stare; those are the right words. I met them in a newspaper. If you feel like adorning your profession, you may show me the way to a respectable—let me think, what do they call it? Oh, I remember—pawnbroker's!"

"But you just said you was not searching an uncle, and now it turns out that you are on that track exactly."

"What do you see in me that puts it into your

head to think my folks are in the old clothes line?" demanded Clovis, getting red.

"Come on, my bantam," answered the officer, grinning, "you are as full of green sap as a rock-maple in the spring. What have you to sell?"

"That is my affair," retorted Clovis, angrily.

"Soft and easy wins the game; a civil tongue is an ornament that highly adorns a boy. Look here, a good adviser is what you want. I'm the chap!"

As he kept tapping the right breast of his blue coat, and nodding, Clovis was moved to ask him an entirely irrelevant question.

"Is that all *you* inside there, or is it wadding?"

"Never mind, my lad, there is enough of me to take care of a chap about your size. What do you think of that—there, now?"

He left off punching his breast, and shutting his fist, he began to feel the muscle in his arm with immense satisfaction. "Don't you see I am able! but I don't want to hurt good boys, if I do carry a club. I know what you mean to do—you mean to tell me me a little story. Come! I'll start you. 'I am a first-rate young chap. I am the son of a gentleman. I have run away——'"

"What is there," interrupted Clovis impatiently,

"about my looks or my behavior, that makes everybody open with that?"

"Why, my little man, it is as plain as if you had got it written on your smooth face. Here you are wandering around looking for a pawnbroker. I'd bet my sweet life you've cut the old folks. Good clothes, no money; in course you have!"

"I don't see that it particularly concerns you, but since you are so determined to meddle, I'd as soon tell you. I have left home."

"Go back, my bantling, go back, and don't lose any time either."

"If that is the advice you are bursting to give, you need not mind knocking that wadding in your blue coat any more. I'm going after work, and I know just where to get it, too."

As he spoke he pulled out Mr. Bell's card, and while he was reading it, the officer hesitated not at all to peer over his shoulder and examine it also.

"There is where I am bound for; but I have a little business to transact first, as I told you."

"But what are you going to part with? Open up, bub, I am safe. I've got boys at home of my own."

"You don't say so! I thought policeman led single lives—like Catholic priests, married to their

profession. I hope you don't use that club in your family."

"You was pretty sassy yesterday, and you haven't improved no great since."

"Who was the sauciest, if it comes to that—you or I? Because you happen to be a foot or so taller than I, you needn't try to bully. I wish you were as good a policeman as you are Irish Yankee. I should not have to sell my overcoat.

"How so?"

"You might have caught those scamps, and made them disgorge my property."

"They contended you was just a wrastlin', and the fat party, he seemed to be of the same mind."

"Wrestling with strolling beggars! I wonder what you take me for? I think too much of myself to be fooling with a couple of ragamuffins. You didn't believe what I said. You threatened me with your lock-up. I am sick of you. I won't talk any more with you, anyhow."

"Oh, yes, you will, bub," answered the officer, seizing fast hold of Clovis' shoulder.

"Leave go!" exclaimed the lad, snatching away. "Hands off. You want to make folks think you are arresting me!"

"No, no. I was only figuring for a wery particu-

lar conflag. That is a nice overcoat, all lined with fur. Pity to sell it. Tell me why you picked up such a foolish notion."

"I vow I will! You make me think of the old woman in my Bible lesson, sticking and hanging like a dog to a root," replied Clovis, quite worn out with the officer's good-natured pertinacity. "The money the scamps stole was not mine. It belonged to a man who needs it, and I shall not sleep another night till I have sent it to him. Mr. Bell paid my fare after I was robbed. I can't stand being in debt. There now, you have got the whole story, and I hope you feel better."

"Thank you, my pretty prattler. Out of debt is out of danger, sure as pigs make pork; but be advised by a fellar that knows what knocking around means. Right about face! They'll all feel gay when Johny comes marching home."

"You go through the motions first-rate, and your voice is not bad. But let me ask you, Do you know what pride is?"

"I see, I see. Well, you are bound to buy your experience. Lord take care on you. Haven't you something else to spare that won't make you suffer cold. You know you ain't used to it."

"Not a thing. If I feel chilly, I'll comfort my-

self with knowing that Mr. Dupres has his money to buy a load of hickory wood."

"Stubborn as a ten-dollar mule! But I kinder glory in your spunk, and I'll stand by and see fair play."

CHAPTER XIII.

ISAACS TRADES MIT BOLITE BEOPLES.



TURNING off into a side street, they soon stopped at a door above which swung the three golden balls, Clovis had heard so much about since he left home.

"Now I know what Mr. Bell and you others meant! A pawnbroker is an uncle to all these folks in New York. That much I have learned by traveling. Now let's see what good it will do me."

"A customer, Isaacs! This boy has a notion of parting with his overcoat. You don't get such a handsome, valuable garment offered every day in the week."

"Handsome! You tink so? Valuable! Oh mine goot friend!" answered the trader, peering at every seam and button of the coat which Clovis

pulled off, and held out for inspection. "I sell petter ash dat for ten dollar, all new."

"This is new!" exclaimed Clovis, impatiently. "I haven't worn it a month, and only for best at that. If you want to buy it, say so. I can't wait all day."

"My young friend isn't a very palaverer chap, is he, Isaacs?" said the policeman, much amused with Clovis' behavior, and the hanging under-lip of the Jew, as he stared at him. "He wears mighty good clothes, though, don't he? You can afford to give him something worth while for that surtout."

"Yes, oh yes, mine friend, seein' it's you, I'll give ten dollars," said the Jew, straightening his bent back, and wiping his glasses on an old rag, which served him as handkerchief. "I'm going to make you one grand offer. I always favor the beoples you bring to my shop; I'll say ten dollar. There now, what you think of that?"

"I guess you are not much of a judge of mink skin," spoke up Clovis, displaying proudly the lining of his beautiful coat.

"You will have to give forty, at the very least, Isaacs, or I will take him further," said the officer, decidedly; "I don't bring you customers to have the skin peeled right off of their backs."

"Oh, mine dear friend! you are crazy. Mine

broder he will not give more but five. I name men-dous price to young shentlemons. I make no mon-eys, because I am too kind-hearted; I offer too much."

"But I could not pay Mr. Bell with ten dollars. I'll sell my cap. Here, old stick-in-the-mud, what'll you give for that?"

"Nothing! nothing at all. I trades only mit beobles that is bolite. I don't have the tings at no price at all," snarled the Jew, throwing down the coat.

"Isaacs is right there," said the officer, shaking his head and frowning. "You are too pert by half."

Clovis failed to hear the reproof. His ears caught the strain of a song outside, which fixed his attention instantly.

"There he is again, with his 'Father, dear father,'" screamed he. "Come on!" and away he darted without his coat or cap.

His mad progress was arrested by his friend, who unceremoniously seized him by the shoulders.

"What the deuce are you up to?" said he, giving Clovis a hearty shake.

"Oh, dear! another chance lost. Why couldn't you leave me alone? They had their old harp and fiddle, and they saw me, too! I vow I wouldn't treat a dog so. Oh, you needn't begin to peer out

now ; they went around that corner. You are not worth a shag-bark shuck."

"You ought to have tipped me the wink, kinder sly, bub. You wouldn't make much of a detective."

"I don't aspire to the honor of matching you," retorted Clovis, reaching his hand to his vest-pocket, thinking to consult his watch. "I guess I'll have to put off my trade to-day."

"Lost that, too?" asked the policeman, observing the unconscious action,

"It is in a safe place," replied Clovis, laughing. "I forgot myself."

"Sold it?"

"My father painted his barn red once, and when they asked him why he chose that color, he said it was to make fools ask questions," replied Clovis, struggling into his coat. "Here's an hour gone for nothing."

As he reached the door, the Jew called after him, "I don't mind your leetle fun ; I see 'tis your vay. I'll give you dirty."

"Hand over, quick, then," replied Clovis, in eager haste. He had small patience to wait the slow counting of the greasy bills which seemed to stick like putty to the trader's fingers.

"Pauf ! I wish they smelt better," said he,

snatching them with scant ceremony, and bundling them into his vest pocket. They're real filthy lucre; but they won't bother me long. Now, policeman, I thank you for so much, and if you will show me the way to Mr. Bell's, I'll thank you some more."

When they were about to part, the officer put out his hand, "This is my beat, bub," said he, kindly. "I hope you will get what you are after; if you do, you will be luckier than most. New York is a hard old place."

"I've found that out, already. If it were not for Mr. Bell's promise, I should be quite discouraged, but——"

"Well, if you *do* need a friend, you come to me. I've took quite a notion to you."

"Thank you. I believe you are a goodish chap if you are not much of a thief-catcher," laughed Clovis, as he ran off.

CHAPTER XIV.

"GAFFER LONG LEGS, WITHOUT A TOOTH OR TONGUE."



T was up-hill work to reach the store of Wolfe, Lamb & Co. Unused to finding his way through streets which all looked alike, he soon went astray from the policeman's direction, and then he inquired of boys, who sent him wrong for mischief, or of stupid people who did not understand; or of indifferent ones who took no trouble to attend; but by dint of doubling on his tracks, skittering around corners, jostled here, pushed there, till he began to think there was no room for him in the inhospitable city, he did at last reach his goal, and he looked up and read the great gilded sign with much satisfaction in the splendor and extent of the immense edifice.

"I could never dream of working in a second-rate establishment," said he, "and my dad the biggest merchant in Millville."

He found it not easy to effect an entrance, even after he had arrived, because a grinning boy held the office of door-tender, and he attended it so

maliciously, setting his knee and shoulder to the work, that Clovis puffed and struggled, and got red in the face, before he managed to push half of his body through a crack he made, and which wedged him fast as a vice.

"Come, now! what do you want?" inquired the wide-nosed flat-faced warder, treating Clovis to quite a wonderful variety of ugly grimaces.

"I vow!" blustered Clovis, "I never saw such a place as New York. You can't do a thing but some fool asks you what you want. It looks as if I wanted to get into this store, and I'll punch your head as soon as I do, as sure as you're born."

"Does my lord want to buy a handkercher' to wipe his little freckled nose?"

"You will wipe yours pretty soon. There, now! how much do you measure, lying flat on your back?"

With a mighty effort, Clovis got his will, and as a necessary consequence of the sudden wrench, the other lad was sprawling in the dirt, from whence he rose, sullenly glaring at his enemy, and rubbing his head.

"Where is Mr. Bell?"

"None of your darned business," snarled the door-keeper, in an exasperated undertone. "If I

knew, I wouldn't tell you. I ain't hired to answer questions."

When Clovis was angry, he generally raised his voice, and as he got madder and madder, he made considerable noise, which attracted the attention of a fat round-bellied man, who came trotting down the aisle to investigate the cause.

"What! what! who is making all this racket?"

"I ain't a doin' nothin', sir; this fellar, he's a been carryin' on like sixty. I was a stoppin' him."

"Don't you know better than to behave in such a boisterous manner, you boy? Get what you came for and take yourself off!"

"I don't know but it is the fashion in New York stores to squeeze people into doors, when they try to enter peaceably, but it's a fashion I haven't got used to yet, so I took the liberty to get through as I could, and as I was stronger than your smart young man here, I floored him, and he kept it up by refusing to tell me where to find Mr. Bell; he says it is none of my darned business."

"What! what!" spoke up the fat man, sternly eyeing the the door-keeper. "What! what! You try to keep people out! you refuse to reply to civil questions. What are you here for, I should like to know?"

"I was just a goin' to, sir. I was a tryin' to let him through, when he took and pushed the door right into me and hurted me!"

"Hum!" said the merchant, scanning Clovis in unpleasant surprise, "I've seen *you* before. A little apt to get into fusses, aren't you? This seems to be the style of boy you like to wrestle with, judging by the company I saw you in yesterday."

"I vow!" exclaimed Clovis, pettishly, "I have a great mind to say I *was* wrestling. I have denied it so often, there is getting to be a perfect sameness to my conversation. I don't want to make you down on this beauty you keep at your door, because I intend to put a head on him myself. I am *not* quarrelsome. I was *not* wrestling. Mr. Bell told me to call here. It is a business appointment."

"You will have to come again; there is no knowing when Mr. Bell may return."

"I'll wait till he does, if it is pitch dark," replied Clovis, doggedly, "I am going to see him before I leave the place. I've walked my legs off to find it, and I am not sorry I did, either. You sell a good many goods, don't you?"

"Pretty fair," replied the merchant, smiling.

"It's a handsome store. I like the looks of things.

I'm going to have a situation here. I've got Mr. Bell's word for it.

"We are fortunate in your good opinion," answered the merchant. "As for our door-keeper"—he added, frowning at the lad, whom he surprised in the middle of an ugly grimace, which was deftly converted into a penitent leer.

"If you please, sir, I didn't go to do nothing—he banged me, and took and knocked me flat; it hurts yet."

"Will you listen to that!" said Clovis, wrathfully, "how could I have pushed him if he had been where he belonged? But you needn't mind scolding, sir; I'll attend to his case as soon as I get him outside."

The merchant laughed. "You had better keep the peace inside, at any rate," said he.

"Yes, sir, and sha'n't he go right away, sir?"

"No. I will stay till I see Mr. Bell. I tell you I am going to work for him."

The door-keeper stuffed his fist into his toad's mouth, and put his fingers to his nose.

"At any rate, I will wait till I get a fair chance to knock this beauty endways," added Clovis, with intense disgust.

"An excellent recommendation for an aspirant

to our service, truly," said the merchant, as he noted the contrast between the lad's fresh, frank face, and the ugly common features of his antagonist. "Knocking boys endways is not on our list of qualifications."

"I dare say not. But I have been only two days in New York, and I have found out already that if a person cannot take his own part he is pretty bad off!"

"You are right, my boy. Well, if you really mean to wait for Mr. Bell, you may sit down, but no more fighting, understand!"

"Let me go into the office, won't you? I want to write a very important letter!"

The ugly lad laughed outright at this audacious proposal, but he stopped very short and performed a small cough, as his employer turned his eyes on him.

"What are you sniggering at?" inquired Clovis. "Don't you suppose I ever saw the inside of an office?"

Quite taken by the off-hand trustingness of the young stranger, who asked as if he was accustomed to receive, the merchant felt inclined to grant his request, and he was much amused by the idea of a

fighting applicant, who boldly avowed his intention of settling his disputes with his fists—

“An important letter, is it? Very well, come with me.”

Leading the way into a handsome room, where a tall, pale, slender young man was writing at a desk, he pointed out Clovis with a wave of his hand.

“Mr. Rexford,” explained he, in a low tone, “here is a queer fish who wants to write a letter—keep an eye on him!”

“Which eye, sir?” demanded Clovis, saucily. “I couldn’t help hearing, excuse me—and I don’t mind being called an odd fish either, if I swim into a good situation here.”

He perched himself on the edge of the high stool offered him and squared his elbows to his work, into which he dashed with a preparatory flourish of his right hand, and so intent did he become upon his occupation, that he ceased to catch the subdued conversation between the merchant and his clerk.

“Who is the youngster?” asked Mr. Rexford.

“I haven’t made up my mind whether he is an honest boy in trouble, or a great rascal. We will see what Bell says.”

Meantime Clovis had completed his epistle, folded into it the twenty-dollar bill, and ad-

dressed it in a clear boyish hand to "Mr. Ange Dupres." He felt in a hurry to get it off, and very happy and light-hearted over it. Suddenly a hearty voice close by caused him to jump down in haste.

"Oh, Mr. Bell ! Mr. Bell ! how glad I am to find you at last. It seems years since you left me that night !"

He went on pouring out his perplexities and adventures, in rapid words, and tears were streaming down his cheeks while he talked, of which he was utterly unconscious :

"Now, Gaffer Long Legs, without a tooth or tongue,
If you want a little boy,
Now's your time to get one ;—

and you do want me, don't you, Mr. Bell? You are not a gaffer, and your legs are rather short," went on Clovis, looking down at the stout limbs supporting the merchant. "I am so glad to see you, I don't know how to behave ; I had no idea what it meant to be a stranger, before. Everything is so queer and so unfeeling, but since I see you, I feel better. You will set me at work *to-day*, won't you, Mr. Bell?"

"Can't we give this whipster a berth, Wolfe?"

asked Mr. Bell, as much pleased to find the lad in whom Lily was interested as to be found of him.

"He will never do," answered Mr. Wolfe, shaking his round head; "he has offered to thrash a boy, already; he is entirely too uproarious and saucy to be any good. You are pretty much used to having your own way, I expect," he added, looking at Clovis, whose face fell, though he still kept fast hold of Mr. Bell's hand.

"I don't really remember whose way I had. Nobody ever told me I was saucy before I came here. I didn't understand why I hadn't as good a right to say what I wanted to, as other folks; but I know how to be obedient, as I will show *you*, Mr. Bell."

"Where's Lambe, Wolfe? He will have an opinion on this matter."

"'Tis a foolish lamb that makes the wolf his confessor."

"What! what! what do you mean by that, sir!"

"It is a proverb we acted at Leonore Groenveldt's party, Christmas night. I did the Wolf."

"He won't be likely to do the Wolfe in this establishment, eh, partner?" laughed Mr. Bell.

"I suppose I must try to be an innocent lamb, and say ba, ba."

"Lambe will never put up with this sort of chap," said Mr. Wolfe, trying to look stern. "A cash-boy is a mere machine, from his stand-point."

"We'll soon know about that ; I've sent for him," replied the Co.

"Oh, he'll say take me, I will do you good ; little girls cry for me ; for further particulars, see advertisement inside wrapper."

"I tell you, Lambe will go stark staring mad ; he'll kick the saucy boy out in no time, if he lets his tongue run this gait."

"Then he is not like Mary's lamb. *He* made the children laugh and play."

"This beats the world," exclaimed Mr. Wolfe, sticking his hands under his coat-tails, and rising and falling on his toes, with a flop. "We cannot have a cash cutting jokes on the firm at this rate. Audacious !"

"Oh dear ! don't call me such a bad name as audacious. I only felt like making the remark. I am sorry you didn't like it. I won't any more ; no matter how much the wolf roars and the lamb bas, I'll never let on that I took any notice. I'll mind the bell every time. I *must* have work. I've somebody depending on me."

In telling his story, Clovis omitted to mention

Blossom-bud, and Mr. Bell pricked up his ears at once.

"Where did you find your somebody?"

"On the street, sir. I didn't have to hunt; there seems to be plenty of -chances for picking up such, down here."

"This *is* Lily's philanthropist, I do believe," said the merchant to himself. "I won't catechize him; unless I misread him, he'll soon tell me all about it. Ah! here comes Mr. Lambe. Now we'll state your case to him. You see this youngster, partner, what do you say to him for a cash?"

Mr. Bell's eyes twinkled as he gave Clovis a slight push forward, and he and Mr. Wolfe exchanged winks.

Mr. Lambe was a tall spare man, with bristling gray hair, shaggy gray eyebrows, large thick ears, a hanging jaw, a wide mouth, which, when he talked, showed a good many long, yellow teeth. As he was never known to be without a quid of tobacco in his cheek, of course a certain article of American plenishing was a necessity of his being, and he looked anxiously about him before he was able to speak.

He habitually clenched his hands as if taking care of the pennies which will not take care of themselves. His clothes hung on him, his boots

were too large, and full of wrinkles, his linen was crumpled and soiled, and altogether he was such a contrast to Mr. Bell's large benevolence and Mr. Wolfe's dapper good-nature, that Clovis could not take his eyes off him. The partners chuckled. Mr. Lambe saw them ; he did *not* chuckle. He commenced in a loud, important voice :

"Come now, you boy, what are you staring at?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Wolfe."

"My name is Lambe ; call me by it."

"I can't make it come right," said Clovis, hopelessly shaking his head.

"Make what come right ? Nid-nod ?"

"Here's Red Ridinghood's wolf, and there's Mary's lamb. It is no use trying to fit on the names any other way."

"Well, of all the impudence I ever heard !" said the merchant, glaring savagely into Clovis' fearless face. "I've a great mind to cuff your saucy ears."

"You see, partner, he had an idea you would be docile and gentle, like Mary's pet," said Mr. Wolfe, wiping his eyes, after a hearty burst of laughter. "I told him to wait till he knew you."

"*You two* might be in better business, than encouraging an impudent jackanapes to be disrespectful to his elders and superiors," snarled Mr. Lambe,

swinging wrathfully off. "I wish you wouldn't break in on my business with such pleasantries. I have plenty to do, if *you* haven't."

Clovis gazed disconsolately at him, as he stalked by, throwing quite a wolfishly savage glance as he passed.

"I've cooked *my* goose, now, I suppose," said he, mournfully. "It's all my dad's fault. If he had snubbed me, I might have learned to hold my tongue, and have better manners. I might as well be going ; mightn't I, Mr. Bell ?"

"I think we will give you a chance," said the merchant, patting his shoulder pleasantly. "I hire the boys, and if you are careful and useful, partner will be willing to overlook this inauspicious beginning. He likes those best who do the most work."

"So say we all of us," chimed in Mr. Wolfe. "I am a perfect martinet myself. Do you know what that is?"

"I should think it might be a little marten, sir, as a parroquet is a little parrot."

"Business, business ! Wolfe. You will spoil the lad, if there is any spoil to him, before he gets started."

"Joking can't hurt me, sir. I was brought up

on jokes. My father is the funniest father you ever heard of."

"And what is the funny father's name?"

"My name is Clovis, sir, as I am not going to make my will just yet, I'll go on that, if you please, Mr. Bell."

"All right, my boy. But I ought to know something about the Clovis at home."

"I wish you wouldn't ask me. I don't want to tell you. I'll bet you didn't tell all you knew when you was a boy?"

"That depends on who made the inquiries. We never buy pigs in pokes, here. We expect a reference, a *character* you understand, when we hire."

"I intend to make my character, commencing to-day. There is only one thing I mean to state honestly. I have run away from home."

"I know that already, Clovis," said Mr. Bell, kindly. "I shall not insist, but I thought you might be glad to inform me why you took such a step."

"No, sir. I did take it in a great hurry, and I cannot put my heels where my toes have been. I feel certain my father will think better of me if I have pluck enough to stick to my bargain. I shall, anyhow, till I try what I can do alone."

"There is sense in that, partner," remarked Mr. Wolfe. "I have a mind to lend him a hand."

"One more question, first ; can you look us in our faces and say, 'I have done nothing mean, false, or wicked ?' "

"Why, Mr. Bell ! *I* wouldn't ask *you* such a thing as that. *I* couldn't look in *your* face if *I* did. I vow I wouldn't treat a dog so !"

The partners exchanged glances, and Mr. Wolfe winked at Mr. Rexford. "Good stuff in the stripling," whispered he.

"Have you told me all which has occurred, since you parted with me ?"

"No, sir !"

"Why not ?"

"I don't wish to talk about some of my experiences. They don't concern anybody here. There is one thing I'll do right away. I'll pay you back that ten dollars."

As Clovis spread out the bill, and offered it to Mr. Bell, that gentleman looked uneasily at him.

"But I understood you that all your money was stolen. You surely have not earned any since ?"

"I did not earn it," faltered Clovis, with a foolish pride, "but it is mine."

"I must know how you came by it," said the merchant, gravely.

Mr. Rexford turned about on his stool, with his pen in his hand, and listened for the answer. He had been interested in the quick-witted lad, admiring his frankness, and his good looks, and he really dreaded to hear him speak again.

"I have a great mind not to tell, so there, now!" burst out Clovis, firing up to red-heat under their suspicions. "I never saw such a lot of men! The nasty policeman threatened to lock me up, because I rang uncle Zoar's door-bell. Mr. Wolfe wouldn't believe me when I said I was not wrestling, and now you all look at me this way! I sold my overcoat to a pawnbroker. I am glad I did, too, if I freeze to death. I vow, I wouldn't be another minute in your debt for all the goods in your store."

Throwing down the money, and whirling about, Clovis tramped off; head up and eyes flashing. They allowed him to leave the office; indeed, he was half way down the long aisle before they thought what to do:

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Wolfe. "What a temper! A perfect young spit-fire!"

"You must admit that he had provocation. Neither you or I would stand being suspected of dis-

honesty. He has an admirable uprightness of spirit, which prefers suffering from cold to being in debt. Eh! Rexford? Don't you think so?"

"The lad has excellent points, sir. A nice sense of honor. There is good blood in his veins."

"Call him back, Rexford! I declare, if he was mine, the world should not buy him from me. We will give him a start, Wolfe, and I will keep a careful watch, too," added Mr. Bell, to himself, remembering his promise to his pretty child. "I firmly believe he is worth all the trouble I can put on him. Such a youngster as he is, with the kind father he talks of, can't be lost long. I will keep him in my charge, and see what comes next. What a nice story I shall have for my pretty Birdie when she cuddles into her nest to-night. If he should turn out to be her philanthropist, how glad and pleased my precious darling will be."

It was some minutes before Clovis returned, with his hand in Mr. Rexford's, and quite shame-faced and contrite. Whether his sudden passion had burned out, or got a dash of well-merited reproof from the book-keeper, is not certain. At any rate, he went straight to Mr. Bell, whom he looked frankly in the eyes.

"I was very rude, sir. I do get mad so easy.

Oh dear! How am I ever to go on, when I have made so many blunders in this short while?"

"We owe you a little apology, too, Clovis. The true rule is to expect good, till we discover evil. I am ready to give you a berth. Not book-keeper,—you see I couldn't discharge Mr. Rexford,—but I'll start you where you can learn business, and it shall be your own fault if you do not rise. Can you be polite, prompt and obliging, while at everybody's beck and call?"

"I'll try, Mr. Bell. I'll do my level best. I mean to earn my wages."

"That is the way to talk," spoke up Mr. Wolfe, rubbing his hands, and teetering on his toes. "Have him ticketed directly. I want to see him on the fly."

"There is one thing I ought to mention, sir."

"Well?"

"I mean to kick that dead-beat by your front door. I must put a French roof on him the very first time he swallows his ugly fist at me. You don't object to that, I hope?"

"It won't do, Clovis. It is one of our rules to discharge any cash who fights. So I give you fair warning, if you want to work for me you must be friendly; and I never take back anybody I send off. You must live in peace with all men."

"Yes, sir. All men. But not all boys. I don't believe that *can* be done. I couldn't sleep nights ! I couldn't say my prayers if I let that chap bully me as he did a while ago."

"I never fought a battle in my life," said the little round-headed partner.

"That is because you are a lamb, sir—no, you are a wolf ! I never shall get it straight in my mind. I'll try to keep easy, Mr. Bell ; but if he dares me ?"

"The best thing for you in that case, my boy," said Mr. Bell, soberly, "will be to stop long enough to consider whether you are ready to cut loose from me."

"Yes, sir. I understand. I hope he will let me alone."

"Plainly put," remarked the book-keeper, as the partners moved off, arm in arm. "Mr. Bell is a man of his word. So you know what to depend upon."

He brought out of the safe a silver plate, on which Clovis read, "No. 70." "This is your badge of office," said he, fastening it upon the lad's breast. "The name by which you will be known among the clerks out there. You can start off as soon as you please."

"I wish I could mail my letter, first."

"Put it in among mine, and it will go."

"Thank you ; but it is a private letter."

"Oh ! You are afraid I will find out where you came from."

"If I wished you to know, I would tell you. Can't I just run to the office?"

"Can the leviathan swim a league? You may drop it into the box on the corner, and the carrier will find it. He has no curiosity about you."

Clovis darted out a side way, as directed. He found a sort of casket stuck on a pole with a small door in it. He pulled and pushed. He peeped under and looked behind it, but he could not get it open. While he was calling it names, a couple of music-boys strolled into sight, and they stopped to watch his proceedings, which they found full of amusement.

"I say," called out the black-haired, merry-eyed fiddler, "where's your manners? Why don't you knock softly right *there*, and whisper to 'em, and say, 'please give me some postage stamps?'"

Clovis looked up quickly, and without a word, seized the grinning stroller around the neck. He was just about to drop his fist upon his head, when he caught a flash of his new oval badge, and he let go his hold.

"Adoo ! Meet me at pile of pie, as they say in

Sunday school," cried Bob, backing off; "when you get your letter into that there fire-alarm just send me word."

Both strollers burst into a jeering laugh as they shuffled on, and Clovis let them go, making no attempt to detain or hinder them, though he descried the blue coat and brass buttons of a policeman approaching.

"What is the matter, bub?" asked the officer.

"Nothing," answered Clovis, who had told the story of his loss so many times that he did not care to repeat it. "I want to mail this, that's all."

Having dispatched his errand by the help of the handsome Irishman, who also glanced at the contrivance calculated to deceive the inexperienced, and indulged in a smile, Clovis hastened back to the store.

"Hooray! Mr. Rexford," he called out, "I have have had a tip-top chance to fight with the rascal who stole my money. I had just got a good grip on him, and I let him loose because I had a mind to. I remembered my promise to Mr. Bell just in time."

"Why didn't you call the police?"

"I've tried that," replied Clovis, scornfully.

CHAPTER XV.

RELIABLE AS BIFROST.



R. JOHN REXFORD was, as we have said, tall, slender and pale. He had deep purple circles under his eyes, and his hands were thin and delicate ; he looked tired and over-worked ; but his face was so good and trustworthy that Clovis instinctively understood the repose and steadiness there was in him, and wanted to please him, and get his liking.

Mr. Rexford was an artist ; the object and aim of his efforts was to scrape together money enough to take him to the painter's paradise. He had only his easel and his ambition as tools, but he had reasonable hopes, having already sold some pictures,—street-studies, sketched on his way to and from the office, and finished with his best talent and skill at home,—and through them he had obtained orders upon which he worked every spare moment ; but meager diet, scant sleep, and continuous labor were telling on a physique naturally delicate, more than he cared to let himself acknowledge.

He gave Clovis his instructions plainly and precisely, and he also mixed them with fun.

"You must be as fleet as Mercury, as alert as Ariel, as reliable as the good bridge Bifrost, and as persevering as the Fenris Wolf. Use your eyes for seeing, your ears for hearing, but keep your mouth only for breathing, except when some salesman shouts 'cash;' then you are to cry 'seventy' and appear and disappear like the Cheshire cat; and a word in your right ear, since you are anxious to be employed here: keep an account of the calls you answer, and hand them to me at the end of the week: I will let Mr. Bell know what sort of a messenger he has got. Now swing out, and good luck to you!"

Clovis thanked him, and passing down the long aisle between the counters, began to study the rows of clerks by whom his services might be needed.

A clean-faced young Irishman, Patrick Hafferty by name, attracted his attention, and he paused in front of him, to listen to his voluble rattle, while showing a black silk. He marveled how he could talk so fast, and if the fabric he held in his hand in rich folds really *was* the very best piece of goods that ever came into the store for the price, if it *would* wear like iron, and also, if the smart old lady, with whom he was so confidential, was the salesman's

aunt, or mother-in-law ; he showed such absorbed interest in her wants, and manifested such anxiety to have her secure a great bargain ; and then his truant thoughts traveled back to Roaring River, and Dennis Eagan, just such another milk-skinned, red-headed Irishman as the rattler before him, was riding by his side one of the swift horses belonging to the Up Pasture farm, as he had so often done ; and he fell to wondering if he should ever stand behind that counter with such a beautiful green neck-tie, and an emerald stuck in it, and have such a big ring on his finger, and then, as his eyes dropped on his own hand, he wished those ugly warts would make haste to be gone, and that reminded him of the day Pauline Bradshaw stuck a pin through them, and he seemed to see the round stone all green with lichens, fragrant with wood-odors, under which she had buried it, and the mossy dell, and the great rocks, and the mad music of falling water blended in his ears with his playmate's voice reciting her charm--

“ Ugly warts, now disappear,
Grow on toad's backs, but no more here ;
May this fair hand be smooth and white ;
And here's a kiss shall make it right.”

So far was the pre-occupied lad from Wolfe, Lambe & Co.'s fine establishment, that the cabalistic word

"Cash !" struck his ear like the blast of a trumpet, and he started so swiftly forward and screamed out his number so sharply, that the old lady turned about and stared, and he clutched the check so frantically and ran so fast, that she and Mr. Hafferty watched him in wonder, and they both greeted his return with an approving nod.

"God boy ! good boy ! Go on like that and you will spoil your wind, but you will have the satisfaction of doing your duty."

"That was my first go. I have been watching you quite a while. You see, I am number seventy. I intend to carry all your sales hereafter."

"And why do you honor me with your amiable preference?"

"Because you've got such a nimble tongue, and because I've got a friend at home with such red hair as yours, it makes me feel good to look at you. I think you are right handsome."

"The breath of flattery is sweet, verbose youth. You butter everybody that fashion, and it will smooth your path through life."

"And may I carry all your parcels?"

"As soon siventv as siventv times siven."

"But it's a kind of a pity, though, that all the rest

of the ladies have got to take up with inferior things."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't you sell that old one, the very best bargain you had in your whole stock?"

"Get along wid ye," replied Pat laughing, "sure, and if I did its self, and isn't what I have left the very best bargain now?"

CHAPTER XVI.

"GO LET ME WEEP, THIS LUXURY IN TEARS."



R. HAFFERTY was sometimes called "Crying Pat," among his friends, on account of an exploit, which I must tell you. He came fresh from Dublin city, to the store of Wolfe, Lambe & Co., and he came full of zeal, but with only scant knowledge of the terms ladies use in discussing dry-goods.

One day he was trying very earnestly to sell a piece of gray stuff, showing it off in folds, whisking it into different lights, running glibly through a catalogue of its excellences, when the customer asked

him a question, simple enough in sound, but which conveyed no meaning to his unpracticed ears.

"Will it cockle?"

As she projected the inquiry with her head on one side, and an air of exceeding interest in his reply, he considered that cockling must be a rare excellency, of which his countrywomen were ignorant, and he determined confidently to claim it for the fabric in question, and he accordingly answered with positive assurance.

"Oh yes, indeed, ma'am, it cockles beautifully; we have never had a piece cockle equal to this same. Ye may run the city over, and not find another as good for cockling."

Poor Pat was quite crestfallen to see his customer drop the stuff, and stare at him, before she walked away looking ready to explode with laughter; and shortly after, he heard her relating the circumstance to Mr. Wolfe and the Co., who fairly shook their sides over it.

"What the mischief do the crayturs mean by cockle?" asked Pat of his neighbor-clerk.

"Shrinking in puckers, when it gets wet."

"Then it is not a first-rate recommendation for the stuff, is it, sure?"

"I should say not; nobody wants a gown drawn

into wrinkles and creases with every drop of rain."

"Like her ugly mug, just ! barrin' 'tis not often wet wid the clean water, judgin' by the yellow hue of it. Why couldn't she say shrink ? Bad luck to her.

The unlucky mistake got about among his fellow salesmen, and young Hafferty heard the changes rung on it all day long. There was a great deal of of bad blood between him and his tormentors on account of his blunder and their teasing. He became silent, and sometimes surly, his ardor for selling goods was dampened. The gushing confidence so natural to a light-hearted Irishman, and so necessary to his success in life, and his happiness and good temper, was gone. He stood about with a "tread on the tail of me coat " kind of air, and became utterly indifferent to the wants and wishes of all who applied to him—whether pretty or ugly, he seemed to consider them troublesome and *de trop*.

Finally, Mr. Lambe told him plainly and not very blandly that, unless he showed more spirit and tact, in short, unless he could make his services valuable, his place would be vacant, giving him a week to redeem his reputation.

His first impulse was to go; but Mr. Bell found out that he was in disgrace, and learned the cause,

and he had a kind talk with the disheartened fellow, pointing out to him some stubborn facts and their consequences. If he was dismissed as incompetent he could never be taken back, and would have no reference; and to obtain a new situation, under these circumstances, would be nearly impossible. The Co. urged him to try again, and redeem his reputation. Hafferty felt the truth of the statements, and was grateful for the considerate way in which the case was put. He did try, but the week passed on, and no important sales had been effected. Finally, on the very last day, a young lady came to his stand and asked for bombazines. She was dressed in deepest weeds, and wore a long crape veil, which she drew back as she spoke, disclosing a sweet sad face, bearing marks of frequent tears.

Pat pulled down his stock piece by piece, alertly eager, cheerfully anxious to please, and with smiles and ready grace he set forth the excellencies of each—comparing, discussing, and praising.

The young woman examined them all; she felt of them; she smelled at the dye of them; she listened to his eloquence, which had failed to interest or convince her. Finally she pushed them aside, and rose.

"I like them well enough," said she, "but I don't

care to purchase till I have examined other assortments."

As she turned to leave, Hafferty felt inspired by despair to try a bit of emotion, and he remarked in a low tone, deep and trembling,

"A bereavement in your family circle? Forgive me, but I cannot help speaking; I too have lost——"

As he buried his face in his handkerchief, so overcome as to be unable to complete his sentence, suddenly and unexpectedly distressed, the surprised young woman failed to catch what he had lost; but her attention was arrested, and, her heart being soft and tender with her own grief, she was ready to sympathize with the red and white young fellow, whose bright cheek she could see, as well as the cunning dimple in his chin; and she lingered to learn the woe whose pressure had broken the bonds of conventionality through longing for consolation. Being a nice little brunette herself, she naturally admired such a bright strawberry blonde; and from interchange of experiences and condolences, they got back to mourning fabrics. The upshot of it all was, before the afflicted one left the store, Mr. Patrick Hafferty measured off for her the very piece of bombazine she had declined to buy; and he did it in a subdued triumph, in which softened feeling

blended with business particularity, a general desire to please, and an especial devotion to her individually, which was a most charming combination of clerkly excellence and amiable manhood. As he bowed to her in parting, a smile of mutual good understanding was exchanged.

"I trust you will permit me to sell you something more in future," said Pat.

The manner and tone of the customer's response promised a good chance of profit for Wolfe, Lambe & Co., in days to come.

After she had disappeared, and Mr. Hafferty had put his sorrow and his handkerchief in his pocket, Mr. Lambe took him aside.

"We can't spare you, Hafferty," said he; "such command of tears is worth your wages; you are the only crying salesman we have; you may hereafter confine yourself entirely to the bereaved department."

And so Pat was reinstated in his place, and he did not in the least mind the nickname which his fellow workers fastened on him, and only laughed when they called him "crying Pat," which he could well afford to do, as the pretty buyer of sables came again and again, and brought friends in her train, who were a solid value to the establishment, and

not one of them would select so much as a hair-pin, unless the pleasant Irishman could attend them.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. REXFORD GIVES ADVICE.



T needed some time for Clovis to become accustomed to the raging demands for "Cash," which clashed against each other from so many different voices. The salesmen were not all so jolly as his first friend; who had generally a merry word or a wink for him, nor were they all as patient as oxen, and some of them fired hard words at the laggards, being themselves harried and rebuked by their superiors, especially Mr. Lambe. It took time also for him to learn his way about the immense establishment, where all the departments looked so exactly alike, as well as to thread successfully the bewildering mazes of trailing gowns, dragged by fine ladies, without treading on the yards of silk sweeping the floors, or knocking over any of the bedizened children: even he, lad as he was, had sense enough to feel sorry for the little pale things, who ought to be running loose in the

fresh air, instead of showing off their clothes, to gratify silly mothers in the hot store.

Being quick-witted, however, as well as fleet footed, he made his way. He watched the other cashes, he attended closely to orders, and he got an occasional timely hint from Pat Hafferty, and as he never loitered an instant, or made a mistake, he had as many calls as he could possibly manage.

The constant succession of new faces, ever coming, caused him to wonder much if anybody stayed at home to keep house in New York, and when six o'clock at last set him free, Mr. Rexford beckoned to him, and he went in and leaned against the office rail, quite white and exhausted.

"Well, Clovis, my king," asked the book-keeper, "how do you like it, as far as you have got?"

"Pretty well, thank you, but I am glad there is not any more to-day. I think I have as big a dose as I am able to stand."

"More than you can stand, I believe. You look as limp as a wilted flower. Sit down in that arm-chair. You won't be stout enough to go on, if you tire out as soon as this."

"I suspect that I am hungry," answered Clovis. "I feel a great goneness, which reminds me of good dinners I have eaten."

"Did you not have any lunch?" asked John Rexford, smiling to see how unconsciously the lad imitated the Apothecary in the play, as he passed his hands over the goneness of which he complained.

"Not a taste of lunch, and only a trifling breakfast either; in fact, a good honest meal is an enjoyment I but faintly remember."

"That won't do; boys want regular feeding as much as pigs. Lord! how hungry I used to be. No trumpery oatmeal or cracked wheat would satisfy me—solid beef and plenty of it is the stuff to make strong men of. Let me see! No. 70 goes to his dinner at one o'clock; leave of absence half an hour. If you live a long distance off you had better fetch a bite in a basket. I do. I room in Girod Street, and I get my dinner at night, after hours. You show plainly that you have lived among people who know how to carry themselves; where do you stop now?"

"I should hope I had," replied Clovis, purposely ignoring the last clause of John's remark. "Probably my mother is just about the nicest woman you ever saw, and I don't mean to disgrace my bringing up."

"I trust not. By the way, King Clovis, I have neglected to inquire after Queen Clotilde."

"Clotilde," repeated the lad. "I'd like to know

how she is, myself. I vow! it seems an age since we wore our handsome court-dresses, and danced the minuet, and made bows. It was a beautiful time, and I mean to think about it as soon as I get a chance to think of anything."

"That was, let me see, about the year——" said John Rexford, who thought Clovis was joking and putting on.

"It was last Christmas night, sir. I don't mind telling you; I have a twin sister Clotilde, but I hope you won't try to make me talk about my folks, because you must see that I mean to keep such things to myself."

"All right, King Clovis; but at least inform me where your Majesty dwells at present?"

"I have not made up my mind whether to board at the Fifth Avenue, or the St. James. The *Maison Doré* has a better cuisine than either, but the St. James is by far the most recherche and high-toned. I learned all that to-day; two ladies said just those words while I stood by Mr. Hafferty's counter."

Mr. Rexford laughed at his affected drawl, and when he picked up the short skirt of his coat and pranced off, saying: "Remember, clark, the number of my room is fawty-faw, Mrs. Bogardes Simpson," he laughed still more.

"You may keep your counsel, youngster," said he. "I did not ask the question because I expected the information to be of any use to me. A close mouth is an excellence. Ponder the paths of thy feet, and let thy ways be well established. It looks quite patent that you belong to the porcelain variety of humanity, as it is also evident that your new friend, Bibbs, over there is moulded from the delf, and if you take good care to get no crack nor flaw in rolling against the vessels which are made to please the Potter, some to honor and some to dishonor, you are likely to be set into a sightly place in the right time. Therefore——"

"I like to hear you talk, Mr. Rexford, though I feel that you are speaking more to yourself than to me. I believe I can understand as much as you choose to let me. I've read the Bible all through. I always thought it was hard on the poor things which couldn't have any chance anyhow. I should hate to feel that *I* was made to dishonor, whether I was suited or not."

"You know that you guide your own actions, however, King Clovis. You will pass of your free choice, out of this door, and will bend your steps in whatever direction you wish to take. Your life is yours to make or mar, just as certainly as your body.

The past is dead, take care of the present. If you do, your future is safe."

They had stepped out upon the street while Mr. Rexford spoke, and he inquired why Clovis peered up and down so eagerly.

"I thought I heard that fiddler singing his everlasting 'Father, dear Father, Come Home with me now,' and I was wondering if I hadn't better guide myself right straight over there and put a French roof on him."

"I do not much approve of that style of architecture," laughed John, "you will do well to forget your injuries and come down to the Mercantile Library with me, and get a look at Audubon's Birds."

"I saw them, and the Bewick collection at Craigenfels, thank you, Mr. Rexford. If I shall ever make it quite plain that I *am* the Potter's favorite, I shall be able to take you to that most beautiful place: but just now I need stuffing, and I feel in a hurry to see my folks."

Mr. Rexford smiled at the lad's queer adaptation of his remarks; and would gladly have kept him in his company; and bade him good bye with regret.

"As there are no folks expecting me, nor not much stuffing in my meager den, I can loiter as I

please," thought he, as the lad stepped off briskly and with an air of purpose. "Now where is he going? Heaven grant that he falls into no bad hands; such an honest, well-meaning boy. I shall get near enough before long to know all about him. One thing is plain, he that runs may read: he is a self-willed mother's darling, buying a new experience likely to cost him dear."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOTHER BUNCH UNLOCKS THE CHEST.



LOVIS found the way to the ferry long and tedious, and he tried hard to fix in his mind landmarks, so that he should not go astray on the morrow.

As he neared the boat he began to feel in his pockets for some stray dime left over from his days of plenty, and alas! he found none, but Blossombud's money wrapped in a bit of brown paper was there.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed he in dismay, "that poor girl has had no dinner; here I am defaulting

again. I shall be as bad as a first class Bank President if I keep this pace. How hungry she must be ! we must not sponge on the nice old woman, either ; she will get disgusted if we do ; I'll take home a good lot of hot tripe."

He found the steaming food so appetizing and he was so famished, that he could scarcely refrain from helping himself, before he reached the hut.

It was a bright and friendly twinkle which shimmered through the darkness fast deepening into black night, as he neared the only shelter he dared hope for, in the queer, strange world into which he had so foolishly and recklessly wandered, and he redoubled his speed that he might reach it quickly. He knew for sure that the girl who had clung to him to escape cruelty and suffering would be glad to see him, and he hoped also for a sort of welcome from the friendly dame who had taken pity on her forlorn condition. He hardly knew himself for his father's son, all events which had transpired seemed fantastic like the changes in a dream ; but he could not forget who *had* loved him, and had a right still to expect good behavior, even though he was beyond her reach, and the sound of her tender loving voice, "the best woman in the whole world," held her sway over his thoughts and actions ; and resolutely

and steadfastly he "knocked at the gate of life," confident in his youthful strength, and his purpose to act upon the teachings he had received when he was that other Clovis ; in the splendid home, the door of which he had so willfully closed in hasty anger ; and, hungry and weary as he was, a hope kindled in his heart that he should see them all again, when he could say, "Here I am, unpolluted and faithful."

The old dame looked exactly like the apple-woman from whom he had parted on the corner by St. Paul's ; but Blossom-bud was quite another sort of creature. Her eyes brightened and sparkled at sight of him, and her clean face was shaded by curls of long fair hair.

"Whew !" exclaimed Clovis, "you have been disguising yourself some more."

"I have got rid of all the tangles," answered she, "my head is not a mop now, and I am no more frizzle-pate ; but gemminy cracker ! didn't it pull ! worse than old Gruffy."

"She is a good child—very busy and useful," remarked Mother Bunch, "and you observe, she is by no means bad-looking, now that she is washed and combed."

"I did not mean to carry off all your money,"

said Clovis, setting down the tripe, "I am not used to thinking much for others, but I guess I shall get the hang of it pretty soon. I am afraid you are nearly starved."

"Oh no, I had a good supper; mother let me eat with her. Do not look so sorrowful, pretty boy, it not new for me to be hungry, and I have been so warm all day. I didn't know anybody could be so good to me, as you two are."

"See that you behave, so that we may be always friends. Land sakes! how relishing that tripe does smell. I don't mind getting a bite of it myself, don't you say so?" (patting Blossom-bud's head). "Hang your cap on that nail every time, young sir, and wash your hands in the tin basin—but bless the lad, what's gone with his handsome coat?"

"The Jews have got it, Mother Bunch. You see, I owed some money, and I sold it and sent the twenty dollars to Mr. Dupres, and paid Mr. Bell back for my car-fare down here."

"Just look at me, and you will see
A chap that don't owe a cent of money."

As they watched him dancing about, kicking up his heels, tossing his cap in the air and catching it, they were quite perplexed and anxious, but when he

left off, and told them his day's experiences, and how he had gotten a situation, Mother Bunch said, "Bless the Lord, for He is very good."

"I should think He had better be," remarked the girl, "how could anybody be bad to pretty boy?"

"I guess she means all right," spoke up Clovis, laughing at the frown which was begining to corrugate the dame's face, "don't scold her."

"There is much here which needs mending; maybe it is a work for me. The loving and thankful spirit is there, and the rest may come."

"Is all that about me, Mother Bunch?" asked Blossom-bud. "I did *rest* plenty to-day; I want to be lively now. I want to feel happy and content."

"And so you may, but for all that, you are called to consider how lucky this lad is to find work, when another one might prowl up and down, till he dropped, and die in the gutter at last," added Mother Bunch looking affectionately at Clovis. "I must confess you have been a weight on my old heart all day. Now I can rejoice, for a way has been opened for the prodigal."

"I think *I* could sleep standing, like the horses, I am that tired. If only one could hang on a peg at night! as your broom does."

"Hum! yes, but that is impossible," answered

the dame, looking at him and meditating, "If I had a room—"

"Yes, you would feel safer to know there was an able-bodied man within hail, wouldn't you? to protect your lares and penates. That is Latin; I got it at school. I may as well make the most of it. I am not likely to increase my stock."

"A man four feet high will do me," answered she, quilting her face into a wrinkled smile. "I see plainly that you are a good, true lad, who respects the right. You shall therefore go up into the loft, and I will take her into my bed. Now that she has cleaned out that frizzle, and is so decent, I am content to have her near me. We must get rid of the dirty rags first, though."

Rising slowly, and toddling over to the sailor-chest, she unlocked it with a key she took from her pocket, and brought out some garments, much worn, some of them faded and patched.

"These were my Nan's. I have always kept them because I had naught else left of the dear daughter; and she was the last of four. One after another I have laid my girls away under the sod, and my beautiful boy, who meant to be the comfort of my age, he lies at the bottom of the sea. I'll not give these poor things to Blossom-bud; I'll but lend

them; God may provide a way for her, as he has for you; and when she needs them no more I'll fold them back again; with Nan's little ship, that my old man carved for her, when he lay becalmed on the ocean, and her Bible, and her old shoes, and the tress of fair hair I cut from her head before I put her in the coffin—poor, sweet, loving, little Nan !”

“ Oh, Mother Bunch !” exclaimed Blossom-bud, catching the dame's withered hand and kissing it. “ Don't ! Put back the things ! It would hurt you to see a street child in those. Let me sleep down by the stove, that is much nicer than I am used to. Only think what might have happened to me to-night if it had not been for you and pretty boy. I never should have dared to stop behind old Gruffy, if he had not looked as if he hated her, and felt sorry she pinched me so hard. I am glad I had the courage. He gave it to me from his kind eyes. Oh! I am so happy to be here with you and him.

“ Yes, yes, little one; I don't begrudge the things, but I never can handle them without crying a few tears. You see they bring my Nan right before me. If you are a proper child, it will please me to remember how she ran about my place, the bright light of my life that has been lonesome without her.”

"I am sure I shall be good if you will tell me how."

"So you perceive you have a couple of dutiful children," said Clovis, standing before the dame and smiling, though he might have wept, if he had let his feelings have their way.

"But I, who am worst off, will love you most. I will be yours when his grand folks carry him out of our reach. I don't know much, but I feel sure he cannot always be with us, and you feel it too, Mother Bunch; I see it in your face when you look at him."

As the dame listened to Blossom-bud, she turned her glance upon the handsome lad, who had no right to be in her poor hut; and she sighed to think how his mother's heart must ache; but she would not say so. She did not find it best to argue further on his duties; and she considered her care better than none; so she settled to wait and watch what the good Lord meant by it all in his own set time.

During that first evening Clovis seemed not at all like the boisterous youngster who sported so gayly on the Roaring River ice among his equals and friends; nor yet like the headstrong, hasty son, whose mad passion had pushed him out of the home-nest, but so quiet and earnest, and sensible, that Mother Bunch could not turn her eyes or her thoughts away from him.

- Blossom-bud sat a long time silent with her head in her hand, gazing at the coals in the stove.

"Pretty boy," asked she at length, "is all our money gone?"

"Not quite. I never knew a dollar to hold out so famously; there is still forty cents, which I must borrow for my fares till I am paid; then I will return it all. I only wish I could give you back the same bright coin you got from Miss Lily; that is her name, and I tell you it just fits her to a dot."

"A lily is a sweet white flower. I've seen 'em to the farm. I've smelt at 'em. I never could pick any, because we wasn't left in the garden alone. It is a nice name, but it don't mean so much to me as Silver Dollar. I shall always call her that, and I don't need to have what she folded into my dirty hand with her soft clean ones, to make me think of her eyes or her mouth nor her curls. Oh, I can remember every bit of her without that, and it kept us from starving, didn't it? Oh, we had a bully supper! But I do wish I could have about two dimes. If you could spare me so much I would show you how I can earn my living. I mean to go on the street, and do for myself."

"As how?" inquired the dame. "Poor ignorant slip of a creature," she added aside to Clovis. "If

she understood what becomes a modest child, she would say 'May I go,' and wait till I consented ; but 'tis no wonder ! such ungodly folks as have had the raising of her. When you put on my Nan's clothes, Blossom-bud, you must learn Nan's manners ; *she* was gentle and sweet-spoken."

"And what have *I* said wrong?" asked the girl, a quick blush dyeing her pale cheek.

"There, there ! speak pleasant, child. You don't need to lift up your voice, there's none here that's deaf. When lambs and such like come into this world, they know how to frisk and skipple, and there is naught else they need learn ; but when a baby soul is born, it has got to find out good and ill, and the mother must see to that. I mean to act the mother while you bide with me. You must take corrections in a humble spirit. Cheer up now, and tell your mind."

"Be polite and say thank you," whispered Clovis, behind his hand. "She has some sort of an idea about making money. The girls I know use plenty, but they ask it of men. I am the man here. I expect she'll have to ask me. Won't she, Mother Bunch?"

"Oh no, pretty boy, I will get some jumping spiders and sell them. I used to watch a man dance

them on his finger, and the children bought them ; they will buy mine, and I will be a burden to nobody."

"An excellent plan, child. I will show you where you can bargain cheaply, and you shall stand so near me that I can keep an eye on you. It would be a bad lookout if that wicked woman should lay hold of you again."

"She can't ! she sha'n't ! I will never go with her ! never. I don't see why I didn't run away when she pinched and beat me so. Why did she make me so afraid ? It was because I had not found you, Mother Bunch ; now she could not scare me ; I would only stick out my lips at her, so !"

"Ugh ! but that is frightful ! Pray pull your mouth back into shape. What if it should freeze that way. See, Clovis wonders at you. But ugly as you can look, I believe you could not alarm your enemy or keep her from mischief. You will be safer close by me ; because I expect she is capable of wicked lies, she might be tempted by her master the devil to say you are her child, and so seize upon you."

"But you would tell her, No, she is mine, wouldn't you, good mother ? You would hold me fast, right under your arm ?"

"I might ; I probably would ; but it is better to be sure than sorry. The things that be just, have no dealings with the powers of darkness ; so you beware of Gruffy !"

Blossom had dropped into silent thought and suddenly she lifted her voice and exclaimed :

"Oh, ginger pop ! how I did like Bob ! What a bully chap he was ! if there was but room for him here, how glad it would make me, oh golly ! where is he ?"

Clovis heard her in a sort of maze, the contrast between her symmetrical features, so refined and delicate, and her coarse speech was so sharp, he felt a sensitive shame for her imperfections and incongruities ; and the question he was tempted to ask her was born of an undefined desire to help her to improve.

"Can you read ?" inquired he, with a hopeless discouraged survey of her as she was, and a thought of what she might become.

"Yes, I can spell b-a-k-e-r, baker. We didn't get schooling at the farm."

"Should you like to learn ?"

"I don't know. What for ?"

"Because nice people always read, because an education is the proper thing to have, because—"

Clovis hesitated. It seemed difficult to give a reason for what was to him a necessity of life as much as breathing.

"Can *you* read?" asked she, indifferently.

"I should hope so."

"And you like it very much?"

Clovis laughed heartily. "She is so funny I can't help it," he explained to the dame, who regarded the poor waif in sorrowful displeasure.

"I don't want to be funny; it hurts me to have you mock me; it must be scrumptious to read, when you set such store by knowing how. Will you learn me? but if you bang my head with the old ruler and bat me with the books, and jerk my arms, as the schoolma'am did up there, I'll fight, I fit her and scratched and bit. I ain't a goin' to let nobody smash me all to flinders; no siree."

"What sort of a pupil do you think she would be?" asked Clovis. "Would you run the chance of a row if you were me?"

"She is going to forget all those words pretty soon. It will be a nice way to spend your evenings, and you must begin right away; the time may be very short, and I'll have her to sew and knit as Nan used to. Massy me! what a cheersome hour you two young ones have brought me, here in the poor

hut that has been lonely and dull so long. When you go away to your own place you'll remember that, I know."

"But I am a fixture, as much as that old stand in the corner. When a fellow makes a bed he must • lie on it, if it is hard. I've heard my dad say so, and now I know it for myself."

"Let all that alone! let it rest!" answered the dame, spreading her hands and shaking her head. "Let it bide till the time is ripe; a lad that has a kind mother will long so much to see her face that sooner or later he will say, "I will arise and return. Now I am going to pray; and read a chapter in my Bible, and you must keep quiet and listen."

"What is all that about?" asked Blossom-bud, when the dame had finished her Scripture lesson and closed her book. "Why do you look so sober? Does it hurt you? I sha'n't learn if I must do that way; I want to be merry, like pretty boy."

Mother Bunch used some breath in trying to explain the efficacy and duty of devotion.

"Will your God hear you when you talk to Him?"

"He has promised, and I believe his words."

"Then tell Him I want to be a high lady and go and see Him—tell Him I want to be like Silver Dollar."

"You must ask him for what you need. He loves you!"

"Loves me! I don't believe that. Nobody ever loved me, not even Bob. Why did *He* let old Gruffy pull out my hairs; why did He let *me* suffer? She was bad, not I, but she did all she liked. I could only be still and bear her blows."

The good Methodist's religion concerned more her heart than her head, and she could bring no satisfactory explanation to this natural doubt, so she said what most people say on such occasions:

"That is wicked, child; you must not talk so."

"I don't want to be wicked; I want to be good."

"All right, then; keep still, while I pray."

Mother Bunch knelt down, and Clovis followed her example, making a sign for Blossom-bud to do the same. She looked first surprised, then angry, then obstinate, and would not budge till he took her hand and pulled her to his chair, and forced her by a little push onto her knees.

"Cover up your face, as I do," whispered he.

She gave herself a quick little toss, and squatted comfortably beside him, and after experimenting on several different modes of adjusting her head on his model, she remained quite motionless, but kept her lips moving; and it seemed to Clovis as if her lan-

guage was all ses. She hissed, incessantly like a snake or a sitting goose, and he felt curious to see what she was at ; peeping through his fingers, he found her closely imitating all the dame's actions, rolling up her eyes, winking, clasping and unclasping her hands, and pronouncing, as well as she was able, her words. He made haste to drop his head for fear he should laugh out loud.

"You must not whisper when I am talking with my Heavenly Father," said Mother Bunch, when she rose from her knees.

"Why not—why can't I talk to Him if He loves me?"

"That is not the way to behave in prayer time. It disturbs my devotions, it makes me feel bad."

"Nuff said. I'll be as still as the old Harry. next time. Don't you want to pray some more, till I show how mum I can keep."

"Poor thing, she is not to blame, but it does seem as if there hadn't ought to be such a little heathen in this Christian land. I see plainly that you have pious parents, Clovis, who have instructed you faithfully ; be sure and not go astray from their teachings, and remember that while we are kneeling in my poor hut, somebody in a comfortable home is

asking the Great King to watch over an absent son."

Clovis felt quite sober and solemn, as he climbed the rude stairs to the loft. Such a strange day as it had been ; such a strange life as lay before him ; but refreshing slumber soon closed his tired eyes, and he slept too soundly even for dreams.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CUSTOMER FOR BLOSSOM-BUD.



HE next morning the dame locked the hut, and she and her new family started out together. As they were quite early, Clovis lingered to see Blossom-bud set up in business, with a quantity of jumping spiders in a neat basket.

She tried her powers as street peddler, on her best friend, as soon as she was placed on the corner selected by Mother Bunch ; near enough to be kept in sight, but sufficiently distant to make her appear an independent vendor.

While she swung and dangled the arachne on her finger, till their eight legs sprang out and clutched

the empty air, she lifted her clear voice in a plaintive cadence, sweet and alluring, and she unconsciously wove her call to the passers-by into a rittornello of pleasant measure :

“Look at these spiders, these spry jumping spiders ;
Buy one for the baby, oh, hear me, sweet lady,
’Tis for bread I am asking, who’ll buy, oh! who’ll buy.”

There was a thrill of sorrow in her tones which was a memory of her miseries, and it went straight to Clovis’s heart; he stood spell-bound gazing at her, and recalling what he had heard and knew of her past ; and he started when she suddenly turned to him, her peculiar evanescent smile flickering over her wan features.

“How is that for high?” asked she, in a voice like a soft flute ; “would you fork out the chink, if you came along a stranger?”

Clovis squirmed under the utterance, though he hardly knew why it hurt him.

“I wish you had something pretty to sell,” replied he, “those beasts are disgusting ; ladies abhor spiders.”

“But I have seen many rich ones buy them; and their children were very pleased. You will see, there will not be one in my basket to-night.”

"Well, I wish you luck," he called out cheerily, as he bade her good bye.

Blossom-bud was ¹right, many paused to listen to the peddler and to look at her wares ; among others attracted by the pathos of the petition was a pale, slender young man who was hurrying up town with swift strides.

"By Jove ! there is more in that than meets the ear," said he, scanning with his artist eye the thin clear-cut face, the erect, slim figure, the faded clothes, the picturesque head with its golden curls, over which Mother Bunch had tied a gay silken kerchief in place of the tattered old shawl. She might be a martyr with that sad mouth and those beseeching eyes, or a Saint Cecilia, or a deserted orphan, which she probably is. Hold on, John Rexford ! what are you about ? You have no use for mock spiders, there are plenty of the real spiteful dastardly wretches spinning webs around your old dingy den. You have no children to clamor for gifts ; no money to throw away on an idle fancy. What ! you are determined to indulge the luxury of giving ! to let your sympathy or your whim conquer prudence ? Very well, then, you can eat dry bread for your supper, and go without the cup of tea which you count on ; you know how tired night will find

you. Now put the useless ugly thing in your pocket and don't stare at the girl any more ; if you mean to paint her portrait you need not see her again, you take her face with you past forgetting."

While the artist was thus reasoning with himself, he hastened away, but he carried thoughts of what he had heard and seen, thoughts of longing, bitter thoughts—that such young creatures must fare hard, while rich men roll in riches.

A dozen times that day he caught himself humming her refrain:

"'Tis for bread that I'm asking !" and he left off adding his interminable lines of figures to lift his desk-lid, and exercise the toy, letting his imagination wander to the pale girl on the corner.

He went out of his way that night that he might see her again, and he lost his trouble, for she was gone. A couple of ragged strollers were twanging a harp and scraping a fiddle to the dolorous tune, "Father, dear Father, come home with me now," on the corner she had glorified to him ; and though they begged vociferously, he gave them nothing, and felt cross besides ; that he must be made to think about Benny, who was worse ; instead of the pretty creature he desired to carry home in his mind.

Blossom-bud was light of heart as she walked

by the dame's side, with her day's gains in her bosom.

"Now, it is quite plain, dear mother," said she, "that I can bravely help. Ah, I am so glad! Pretty Boy will laugh when I show him my money."

"But you must feel that it was your Heavenly Father who sent you customers, and thank Him when we kneel and pray to-night."

The girl made no reply, but she pondered the words, longing to understand and obey.

CHAPTER XX.

A FAMILIAR VOICE.



ONE day, Clovis happened to be passing Mr. Bell's private office, and heard a voice which set him trembling, and made his heart jump.

It was but a single remark of two or three words, and then the door, which had been half open, was suddenly shut.

With a single bound he was at home, careless and gay, his mother was busy with his interests and comforts; she rustled about the house in her hand-

some silks; his twin sister flitted and sang; and kissed him when they met; his father joked and loudly laughed. His recent strange and bitter experiences were but a dream from which he was awakened, and he leaned against the wall, forgetting his errand, and oblivious of the bustle and hurry around him.

"Oh! here you are!" exclaimed Mr. Rexford. "I was looking for you."

"Who is in that room?"

The book-keeper seemed not to observe the lad's agitation, or the eagerly questioning, anxious face he lifted to him.

"Mr. Bell has a friend, I believe," he replied, carelessly. "I want you to run right up and hand in these tickets to the boot and shoe department."

"But, Mr. Rexford——"

"Don't stay to prate now. I am in a great hurry. Business first, conversation afterward."

The lad lingered no longer; his friend was so peremptory—he felt obliged to obey in haste.

When he returned, he peered eagerly in at the room, which was now open, and empty.

"Has he gone?" asked he, gasping for breath.

"Who gone?" said Mr. Rexford, with his finger on the column of figures he was adding.

"That man who talked with Mr. Bell."

"He, oh, yes ; I believe so—in fact, I am sure he went just now—for Mr. Bell came here to speak to me."

"Then, it couldn't have been my father!" said Clovis, mournfully. *He* never could have left this store without seeing me."

The poor boy leaned up against Mr. Rexford's desk, and secretly wiped away his tears. After a few moments, the book-keeper turned pleasantly towards him:

"Getting homesick, King Clovis?" asked he; "because if you are, you know, you have but to eat a small piece of humble-pie, and, presto! there you are, right in the heart of the good times again. What do you say?"

"Just this, Mr. Rexford—I wouldn't treat a dog as my father treats me. No, I am not a bit homesick! I'll stick it out, so there!"

"What, what!" called out Mr. Wolfe, "Clovis, the ardent cash, idling! Don't you hear that magic word, which sets so many feet patting, while you loiter here!"

"He has just been carrying checks for me," answered Mr. Rexford, easily. "That is all, Clovis; you may go now."

The boy's blitheness was dead for that morning, and though he kept faithfully about his work, he was heavy-hearted and miserable, and when lunch-time came, instead of joining his good friend, he went away and sat down in a corner, to brood over his folly and its consequences. He wondered if they had all forgotten him, if they never meant to find him, if Dupres had his money? If he knew where it came from? If his sister was content without her twin? If there would ever be any other life for him?

Shame, regret, and pride, fought a hard battle within him, and pride won. Much as he missed his lost blessings, he had no mind to sneak back uninvited; but as he drew his sleeve across his eyes he muttered his favorite vociferation.

Mr. Rexford soon hunted him to his retreat, and without difficulty, discovered what was working in his young mind. So rudely aroused to the hard necessities of life, and its pressing obligations, and while he felt the liveliest sympathy with his struggles, he made it his occupation to divert the current of his thoughts and center him in the business and obligations of the imperative present.

"Is the New York police good for anything?" asked he, after a while.

"That depends on what your definition of goodness may be ; you must be more explicit."

"Couldn't they find a missing boy, if they wanted to?"

"Still harping on the harper, Clovis, my king?"

"No, I am not ; what is the odds? I sha'n't be in the dumps, to please any of them. If folks want me to be an orphan, I am willing ; I guess I can stand the racket if they can."

"Hold on ! my boy ! don't move, till I make a sketch of you ! Let me see ! What shall I call it ? The Alert Cash?"



CHAPTER XXL

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE.



USPUNT ! huspunt," said Mrs. Starbird, wiping her red eyes ; "it is hard to bear ! My Clovis ! my only son ! my beautiful, proud boy, a common messenger, among a retinue of furreners ! Seems to me I cannot have it so !"

Mr. Starbird had just returned from New York, and many tears had been shed over his account of the wanderings and mishaps of the dear runaway.

"This, certainly, is not an arrangement I should have sought ; but as it is settled without my intervention, I cannot feel like disturbing it. The subordinate position is no bugbear to me. I did chores at his age, and swept the store. I had plenty of kicks and cuffs thrown in as extra pay for my services. I won't pretend to deny that I blame myself in the first instance for the whole occurrence ; but I do consider the young rascal responsible to a degree for letting his temper run away with his heels, and I feel as if he ought to get a good lesson, or there is no knowing what sort of a man he will turn out. He has been made of and pampered, indulged, and petted, and stuffed full of vanity, till he thinks he is lord high anything. It won't hurt him a mite, to find his level, and I must say he has shown a good deal of character, what we call 'pluck.' I would give anything if his home-relations had not been interrupted ; but I will own to some pride in his sturdiness and self-respect. Think of his selling his overcoat to pay a debt ! Jupiter Ammon ! I wish my creditors were as zealous to discharge their obligations."

"But, huspunt, do send him a new one! My poor, tender lamb will freeze, and have a cold in his head, and on his lungs, and nobody to make syrups and doctor him. Couldn't you just express him a warm covering anonymously?"

"I might, Emeline; but I won't be in a hurry. Mr. Bell promised to keep a look-out, and he has a friend in the office I depend on; the book-keeper, Rexford by name—a tip-top fellow—reliable and good. If Clovis is in danger of falling into bad ways, or coming to grief, he promised to make me directly acquainted with the facts. About the overcoat. I never had one at his age. Young blood runs warm. I reckon he won't miss it much. Don't go to crying about it, Emeline. I'll do all that is right. I love my boy as well as you do. I want him to be a man, not a molly-coddle."

"But you did not see him. How could you come away without a look or a word?"

"One word, Emeline, might, and probably would have upset the calabash. I am not a stock nor a stone, and I won't swear I could have held firm and resolute in my course, if I had come to speech to him. If he had hugged me, and called me 'Dad,' I might have given way to the secret inclination so strong within me to pick him up at all

hazards. I did see him, but I took mighty good care he should not see me. I watched his nimble pranks. I saw him dashing about his duties all fire and zeal. If he had seemed down-hearted or melancholy, I might have decided differently ; or if I had found him reckless and desperate. They told me how he talked of us with respect and love, and the young dog repeats my proverbs and maxims, guiding his steps by our instructions. He says he has made his bed and must lie in it. There is a red-headed young Irishman among the salesmen, who is quite a crony of his. I inquired and found he had an excellent record. Clovis is not likely to learn anything bad from *him*. It seems as if Providence had watched over your son, Emeline."

"But, oh, huspunt !" exclaimed Mrs. Starbird, clasping Clotilde to her heart, as she rocked back and forth : "I fail to find much consolation in all that. Rachel mourns for her children, and refuses to be comforted. This is trouble. I never knew what that word meant before."

"But listen, Emeline, don't you see that it would certainly ruin your idol, after what has happened, to *fetch* him back here to be chaffed by the boys, and made a hero of by the girls ! *He* clearly understands the position. He told them how he felt, and said, ' I

must stick it out,' and it is just as sure as death and taxes, he is right. So try to look wisely on his side, as well as on yours; the weal or woe of his whole life just hangs on a thread. Will you let him make a standing where he is well-placed, or risk wrecking him, by false fondness?"

"But, huspunt! you can't realize a mother's love; oh no! you didn't bring him into this sorrowful world with suffering and anguish, you didn't nurse him at your breast and wean him on pap, because his dear little stomach was so delicate that hearty cow's-milk was a regiment that never would agree with him."

"Naturally not; but I watched my Emeline's proceedings with intense interest, and I walked the floor with the young shaver a good deal nights. That time has passed; he is a baby no longer, but a rash lad setting up for himself with a vengeance. You will have to bring your excellent sense to bear on the case as it stands, and trust me to manage it for you."

"At least let me write to the precious prodigal. Oh! why can't he arise and return, like the young man in Scripture! There isn't any kind of an animal on the place I wouldn't be glad to kill to make him welcome."

"Wait, Emeline; use patience; you will see him

before long. If he does as well as I expect, we may afford to treat our resolution to a sight of him. We will all make a journey for this purpose. So dry your tears, my little Clotilde; your twin is safe, and fat and hearty."

"I feel sorry for him, papa," sobbed the tender sister, burying her face in her father's breast.

"Of course you do, pet; so do we all, but we must be brave as lions, and we will buy you a very nice present when we make our trip. There! there! my daughter, be cheerful," said Mr. Starbird, wiping Clotilde's eyes, and also furtively his own.

When the discussion was finished, the merchant took his wife's hand fondly in his. "Emeline, dear wife," said he, "I thank you that you have not once, in all this dreadful perplexing trial, made it harder and more bitter, by saying, or *even* looking, '*It is your fault.*'"

CHAPTER XXII.

WERNA MY HEART LICHT, I WAD DIE.



NE evening when he reached the hut Clovis discovered Blossom-bud in a high state of excitement, which so brightened and beautified her that he found her extremely interesting. She rushed at him before he could get his cap off.

"Oh, Pretty Boy ! I've seen Silver Dollar ! She stopped to buy a spider, and she asked me a heap of cunning questions—if I liked spiders, if I wouldn't rather choose to sell flowers, and when I said yes, she laughed, and answered : ' I didn't need to ask such a foolish thing. I am sure you would by your looks; you are like a sweet gay pink yourself, in your red kerchief,' and she made me sing over my call ever so many times, and she listened *so lovely*. She had on white furs, and a plume in her hat like soft sea foam, and her hair curled so light as fine silk, and her eyes—oh Clovis ! how they shone at me ! Your Clotilde, whom you think so beautiful, could not be kinder to you. I did want to tell her I knew her, and thank her for the goodness she had for me that

night, but somehow I hated to make her remember me a beggar in dirty rags; maybe she would come no more if I had; and see! oh, see what she gave me!"

Blossom-bud flew to the bed, and brought out a great waxen doll; which as she raised her, slowly opened her blue eyes, and gazed straight before her, in pensive wonder, as if bewildered to find herself in the humble hut, so different from her accustomed aristocratic surroundings.

"Hasn't she splendiferous clothes? When I am a woman, I will wear just such."

"You!" exclaimed the dame, throwing a troubled glance upon the fervid child, all alive with her happiness; "I hope not. Girls like you, when they get into finery, gets a heart full of sin and sorrow along of it. Don't let me hear you say that again!"

"I meant no harm, Mother Bunch," replied Blossom-bud, blushing under the reproof. "I love to admire rich ladies, and I know right well, folks would bear to look at me much better, if I was grand and gay like them. It *would* be pleasant."

"Turn off thine eyes from beholding vanity, poor worm of the dust. Remember the hole of the pit from which you was digged; and be humble and careful. Such wishes and vain longings have ruined many a foolish girl; they are not safe, I tell you,

beat 'em down in your heart ! kill 'em before they kill you !"

"Oh, Mother Bunch ! don't look so solemn. I am not wicked. I am only an ignorant child. I don't know what you mean. Do smile on me."

"Mebbe I *was* a bit *strengthy*," replied the dame, patting Blossom-bud's cheek, "but a charge to keep I have. I shall do my duty by the children that has no better adviser."

"Tell me more about Miss Lily," said Clovis, who thought the girl's aspirations but lady-like and natural, and himself had dreams of seeing them more than fulfilled, "was she alone?"

"No, her daddy came too, in a carriage and big horses, a nice fat man, just as friendly as she is. He let her stop as long as she liked, and he never looked cross when she gave me 'Winker,'—that is her name, —though I was afraid he would; and I could not reach out my hands to take hers, I felt so queer. I was hot and cold all over with joy and shame. I tried to say she was too handsome for a street girl, but she just pushed her into my arms.

"'I am tired of "Winker,"' she said, 'I have a baby at home, a real one, that can grow ; *she* holds on to my finger tight, and smiles, and makes mouths. My mama found her in a white lily, an angel left

her there for us. "Winker" is always the same.' And oh, Clovis ! Silver Dollar kissed me, you don't know how it feels to be kissed by her, just as if a rose-bud could breathe on you ; so soft and cool, *so fresh*, and she is coming again, she said so. Her papa (she called him 'papa,' I wanted to cry when I heard her, it seemed as if she loved him so), he was pleasant, and laughed and said :

"'Birdie, you little sunshine, you ! come every day if you like, and stay until you exhaust the amusement.'"

Blossom-bud was very diligent that evening, and also very thoughtful. Once or twice she lifted her head, and looked wistfully at Clovis, who was busy with a book Mr. Rexford lent him ; and at last, she looked so long and so earnestly, that he felt her glance and returned it, inquiring what she wanted.

"I was thinking that you and Silver Doller are the one kind, and I am different. You know what it means to have a papa, you can talk wise. I know how to suffer. You have heaps of friends. I have but two, and before long I shall lose you ; then I shall have but one."

"That is true, girl," replied the dame, "the time is not far ahead when us females shall bide in the old hut by ourselves."

"Why did your Heavenly Father make them fine and me common? I want to be like them."

While Clovis listened to her and followed her awaking ambitions, while he observed how much gentler and well-behaved she was since that first night on the street, he thought he began to understand a remark Mr. Rexford made in his hearing:

"It is a question whether, in refining humanity and so quickening its sensibilities, you do not more increase the capacity for suffering than intensify the unexplainable sensation called happiness."

"Birdie is a pretty name," broke out the girl again presently (she was never silent long at a time), "but I like best to call her Silver Dollar; that makes me think how you held my head and let me sleep on our shoulder. I didn't feel much then, how good it was of you, but I do now. I wonder you could bear me near you, all dirt, and you so nice and clean. I thank you, Pretty Boy. When you go back to your Clotilde, you will tell her how kind you was to a beggar in filthy rags, and she will kiss you, as Silver Dollar kissed me to-day."

"What if I took you with me? If the time ever does come, you are so fond of speaking about, I think I will."

"No, no," said the dame, "don't put such notions

into her head. She must be content where she belongs, for what says the Psalmist:

“Honor and grace from no condition rise:
Act well thy part, there all the honor lies.”

“Yes, with you, good Mother Bunch. I am yours now. I want to be yours forever.”



CHAPTER XXIII.

LILY BELL FINDS HER PHILANTHROPIST.



NLY a couple of days afterward, Clovis came home full of fire.

“Hooray!” exclaimed he, tossing up his cap and catching it on his foot; I am even with you now, miss—I have seen her too.”

As it took the lad the whole evening to come to an end of his narrative, on account of the frequent interruptions and comments, of the women-folk, there was no reading or study in the hut that night, and very little work done; both the dame and the young girl were too much interested to dream of busying their fingers with knitting or sewing.

He had been running about all day without rest. It seemed to him that most of the New York ladies must be hunting dry-goods at Wolfe, Lambe & Co.'s. They were making a run on silks, and crowds jostled each other in this department, branching off into others, the eager shoppers purchased quantities of things they never thought of desiring till their eyes were caught by the crafty display of bargains.

"I got these collars because they were so reasonable. To be sure, I never wear broad collars, but it really seemed a pity to let such a chance slip of getting *such* cheap ones," said Mrs. Jones. There were many of Mrs. Jones's mind, and so all the salesmen were busy, and the poor cashes nearly run off their feet.

Clovis was hastening to the desk, his hands full of Pat Hafferty's checks, when he almost ran over a little girl who stood like a statue in the middle of the aisle gazing so fixedly at him as to be unconscious of all else beside.

"Oh! I beg pardon!" said he, "I hope I have not hurt you; I was in a terrific hurry."

She went close up to him and laid her small fingers on his sleeve, with a quaint, old fashioned quiet, in her earnest voice and face.

"You don't know me, but I remember you very well," said she. "You are the Philanthropist."

"Am I? I suppose I must be, if you say so; but I haven't the slightest idea what it is. Nothing bad, I hope."

He put aside his flurry, and waited for her to explain, it seemed impossible to be rude or bustling in her presence.

"It means a person who helps others. Papa told me so, and I know you are it because you took home the poor child who was beaten."

"You are Silver Dollar!" exclaimed Clovis rapturously, "how glad I am to see you again!"

"Why do you call me that name?" replied she, frowning; "I am Lily Bell."

"Have you forgotten the bright piece of money you put into Blossom-bud's hand, that night? She gave you the name; she loves to remember your kindness."

"That makes a difference. I should like to hear her say it. I have often looked for her, but though there were plenty of girls with shawls over their heads, they were not pretty; I did not feel like kissing any of them."

"You have kissed her, however, Miss Lily. You gave her a fine doll."

"Oh! oh, Philanthropist!" exclaimed Lilly, clasping her hands, "the clean slim one with the red kerchief who sells spiders! How glad I feel! And did the dollar do her good? Mamma said it would be taken from her to buy rum. Was it?"

"By no means. I kept it myself. Maybe it might if that old woman had got hold of it, but she didn't, because she ran off, you know, and that was the last of Mrs. Gruffy. Blossom-bud bought her first spiders out of that gift, and we had *such* a supper that night of tripe—the best stuff I ever ate in my life."

"I never heard of tripe."

"Nor I, till then. Blossom-bud knew where to buy it, and if you should ever get real hungry I advise you to try some—it is just luscious!"

"Why do you call her Blossom-bud, as if she was a flower in a garden?"

"We had a choice of four," answered Clovis, laughing. "There was Mop-head, Frizzle-top and Bare-bones. The woman Gruffy had dubbed her all of them, when she was at home, and felt like being cruel. She was cruel too, on the street, when she pinched her; and called her Blossom-bud, and made her beg. I don't believe she has a real name."

"But you have one?"

"Oh yes ; I am Clovis, at your service."

"Clovis what ?"

"Mr. Rexford calls me King Clovis."

Mr. Bell came along, and seeing his daughter talking with the lad she was so fond of speculating about, he felt rather glad of the meeting. It had been difficult to keep his word to Mr. Starbird, who desired his son to be only a cash without any society-helps, and who had particularly negatived the merchant's proposal to make him at home in his house : and he was often tempted to tell Lily the whole story as he knew it.

"Birdie ! what are you doing ? You must not hinder this boy from his duty."

"But, papa, this is the philanthropist. I am full of joy. This is the one that said, 'I wouldn't treat a dog so.' Oh, papa ! you knew it all the while ! He is the same you met on the car, and you never told me ! I see it in your face ; you kept it a secret."

"Well, well, Birdie, let him go now. Observe how full his hands are, and so many customers waiting."

"You have plenty of cashes who are not, philanthropists, papa. Make them take the things and leave me this one. I want to hear more about the little girl and everything. Please, papa."

Mr. Bell was not able to refuse his daughter,

begging him so earnestly with her eyes full of tears, but he protested and fussed while he indulged her.

"What a willful Birdie you are! coming down here to cut into business hours, and upset rules." But he took the checks and carried them on to the desk himself.

"Please be quick," said Lily, seizing Clovis' hand. Miss Squelcher will soon return, and I shall have to go home. Let's hide."

She led the way to a corner screened by lay-figures, which were showing off grand dresses.

"This is a good place," said she. "Now begin. Have you got any sisters?"

"One; at least, I had."

"What became of her?"

"Nothing that I know of. She is having just as nice a time as ever, I suppose."

Lily felt the twist in the tone, and she intuitively knew there was also a twist in the life; she looked pleadingly at him, she longed to be comforting.

"Tell me about what happened. Why did you leave her?" said she, softly.

"Oh, 'tis not much of a story. I had rather tell you Sinbad the Sailor."

"I want to hear about you. You have a home and a sister, when will you see her?"

"Perhaps never; not for a long time, anyhow. I am a roaring cash these days."

"You must come to my house, Clovis."

"What for? Did you buy something?"

"No—you will visit *me*, and eat dinner, and hear my new music-box."

"I guess not, Miss Lily," replied Clovis. "I don't believe it is the fashion for cash boys to dine out. My dad's don't."

"What do I care for other people's fashions, I shall make such as I choose. I'll ask papa; he told me a nice boy would be a good playmate."

"But I couldn't come, Miss Lily." Clovis looked down at his clothes, which, though of handsome material, were beginning to be rusty on the knees and elbows.

"Don't you like me?" asked she, piteously.

"Indeed I do; I think you are very nice. Some day I will be a great merchant; *then* I will come and call in a carriage, and four black horses, and a man in drab livery like your mama's."

"A great merchant won't suit me. I want you for my friend *now*. I don't like by and bye."

"Then I must tell you, Miss Lily, and you can see the fact for yourself. I have no clothes fit to wear in a gentleman's house."

"Oh, is that all?" said Lily, with brightening face. "I am glad! now *I* can be a philanthropist. I will give you plenty."

"I don't take charity, thank you," answered Clovis, flushing proudly. "Besides, I always eat my dinner with Blossom-bud, who has no friend but me. She would hate to miss me."

Mr. Bell stuck his head around a lay figure and began to laugh. "Snug as a couple of wild partridges under a bush," said he.

The instant Lily saw him, she ran and fell on him and began to sob.

"Birdie, Birdie! what *is* the matter?"

"I feel very unhappy, papa. He won't let me be a philanthropist; he says I shall not give him clothes, and he won't come to dinner, he had rather stay with the little girl."

"Who—Clovis? Of course he won't, darling, he is earning his own living, other things to think of and do; and besides, Birdie, you must consult mama, previous to inviting guests to her table."

Before he had time to enlarge further, Mr. Bell was seized on by his partner, who came trotting down the stairs, busy and blustering.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish, Bell—a whole case

of linens ruined by sea water. We must start a damaged sale right away. Come on and inspect them."

"You see, Miss Lily, your father agrees with me. He need not be alarmed, however, I shall not intrude on him," remarked Clovis, rather hurt with his employer's curt decision. "I wouldn't come if he was to beg of me to."

Lily studied the lad a moment, through her wet lashes, quite at a loss how to behave, things being out of joint beyond her power to pull right. She thought she would talk to her papa that very evening, when he called her to Birdie's nest, and ask why he treated her friend so. It did not sound like him, to be so short and peremptory.

"I don't understand, Clovis," said she, humbly, "but I like you very much. I wish you would talk pleasant and smile some more. Tell me what Blossom-bud does at home. I can *think* of you and her, when Miss Squelcher finds fault; that will do me good. Where do you live?"

"In a little house with Mother Bunch, over the ferry close to the bay."

"Mother Bunch! Another funny name, how much you know that I do not, Clovis."

"I will tell you all about us, Miss Lily, if you will keep it a secret. There is no wrong, but I don't

care to get my doings laid out for everybody to look at. You seem anxious to hear, so I mean to trust you."

"I love secrets. I'll never tell, true as I live and breathe! Now begin."

Clovis described as vividly as he was able the apple-woman, and her hut, how he and the girl first found it, and the manner of their life since, how Blossom-bud was learning to read and sew, and how he also studied, while the dame knit stockings.

Lily listened eagerly to the whole. "Mother Bunch is a better philanthropist than I can be," said she sighing. "I had a text this morning, I know now what it means. 'Faithful over a few things.' How can I be faithful over a *few* things, when I have so many? I was sure there were very poor people who are not low and bad; my mama thinks they are all wicked alike. It must be so pretty to live in a hut, and have a handsome boy to talk to every night. I should like to sew, if I had a good Mother Bunch to show me how. Miss Squelcher twitches my work away, and scolds about it. Oh! Clovis, Blossom-bud has you for her friend, and I am lonesome to have you myself."

If the lad had been unaccustomed to being much petted and made of by girls, he might have felt over-

flattered by Lily's naive confessions, but as it seemed to him quite in order that his society should be desired, he appreciated her predicament and was trying to hunt comforting consolations, when Miss Squelcher darted around the lay-figure, like a spider after a fly.

"Always riff-raff, and skiff-skuff ! Miss Starbird. Some young ladies *must* be born with low tastes! Come away directly," said she, in a voice as thin and sour as her face. "Well, and what have you managed to give away to-day! Purse and all this time, probably. *Such* a trial to a genteel lady instructor."

The waspish governess failed deeply to impress her charge for once, however, her thoughts and feelings being so thoroughly among the hut people, that she did not even observe the indignant crimson flush which darted over the cash-boy's freckled countenance, nor his angry flurry, and she broke away when half down the aisle and ran back, with cleared and lighted face : "I see how you feel, Clovis," said she, patting his hand. "I am not *much* sorry that you refused the new clothes. My papa says a philanthropist gives away what he wants to keep. So I couldn't be *it* if I *did* buy you coats and things! But I can try to feel like letting Blossom-bud, have you; and I want you myself very much indeed, *very much*; give my love

to her, tell her I shall buy ever so many spiders the next time I come, and that will be soon."

Poor Lily had a hard time during the drive home that day. Miss Squelcher was so dreadful about her vulgar acquaintances, and bore down so, on the riff-raff and skiff-skuff, that she crouched in the corner of her father's handsome carriage and wept, and "she also heartily wished that instead of a Squelcher she could have a dear old Mother Bunch for a teacher and friend."

Clovis had plenty to occupy his mind after she was gone. The little bitterness kindled in his heart by Mr. Bell's plain refusal to let him be asked as guest to his table was quenched in the good sweetness of his friendly daughter, so that though he was made quite to understand that he must keep to the place into which he had fallen, he lost none of his self-respect; on the contrary, he felt impelled to steadier effort to act well his part, and he looked forward pleasantly to other meetings, with Miss Lily, and more confidential conversations.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PAT HAFFERTY'S SWEETHEART.



YOU may be sure, such a lively boy as Clovis, full of fun, and afraid of nobody, soon found his level in the store; and his wag-gish pertness was a good deal encouraged among the salesmen imprisoned behind their counters, and glad of any nonsense to laugh at; but he liked best of all, his first friend among them, Pat Hafferty, who always had something funny to say, although by profession the crying clerk of the establishment. He often observed at his stand a very sweet-faced pretty young lady in lavender dresses and hats, and he noticed the Irishman's red cheeks get redder, as he saw her approach, and that there was a deal of low talk over the counter, not always referring to sables.

"Pat, is that your sweetheart?" asked he one day, after she was gone.

"And supposin' she were, itself, isn't she the sonsiest girl that iver walks through the place?"

"I think she is very fond of you, Pat," said Clovis, reflectively; "she looks mighty loving out of her eyes at you."

"Heugh! ye slip of a gossoon," answered Pat, blushing and grinning, "what should the likes of you know about love? Stick to yer checks till the down on yer ruddy face can be seen widout a spy-glass, before ye converse on subjects best befitting grown men."

"I suppose I shall have to, Pat. But tell me truly, isn't she your betrothed? I won't speak of it to anybody, isn't she now?"

"Truly then she is. I don't mind whispering it in yer saucy little ear, and well she may be, for it was through her and a gown that she bought of me that I got me nickname tacked fast before the one I inherited, without much of anything else from me blithe old father; and I can bravely afford to hear that same, for the sake of all the good fortune she brought me; the promise of her blessed little self, as soon as Mr. Bell starts me in the branch he has in mind, which may the saints hurry on betimes! There now, ye little wheedlin' beggar, ye've got the story from me, *in trust*, and mind ye keep holy faith, or I'll not bid ye to me gay wedding, when I make pretty Annie Darling Mrs. Patrick Hafferty, which name by the same token she'll always keep for me when she is a *darling* wife."

Mr. Hafferty's confidences were interrupted at

this point by an old lady who flounced up ; and, brushing aside the cash boy as small dust, seated herself on the stool before the salesman.

"Look a here, you clerk," said she, "what did you mean by selling me this stuff and telling me it would wear like iron ? I have not got a month out of it, and it is as rusty as an old stove-pipe."

"Sure, madam ; and isn't iron the mischief and all for rusting itself ? I told ye the truth just, by yer own saying."

The angry customer sat dumb, gazing into the merry blue eyes of the impudent fellow, and she couldn't help laughing at his drollery.

"You do beat all, I declare !" said she. "But your nonsense won't help you cheat me again. I am too old to buy poor goods of a clerk because he happens to be decent-looking, and has a pert tongue."

"That was only a bit of my innocent fun, madam. I meant no disrespect. And didn't you put the words into me mouth, yerself ? We mean to have our goods give satisfaction, and we will make it right. Some of these fabrics, etc.," till Pat sold another gown, and sent away the buyer in excellent humor with him and herself.

Clovis was of use to his friend Hafferty ; because he brought him in contact with John Rexford, who

again got immense satisfaction out of the acquaintance. The jolly, quick-witted, high-spirited Irishman acted on the over-worked book-keeper like champagne wine, exciting his mirthfulness, which so seldom found any food, in the steady grind of his toilsome life, resting his tired nerves and bringing his genial qualities into best play.

A warm friendship sprang up between the two men, encircling the boy, of whom both were fond; and a true friendship was a wonderful acquisition for John Rexford, whose pride and poverty kept him aloof from his kind. Clovis and Pat were no hindrance in his work either, because, in their noonings, he was able to use his brushes more deftly, while enjoying their sprightly nonsense; and sometimes he could not help laying them aside to join in their rough-and-tumble frolics.

Hafferty was amazingly fond of employing his glib tongue in descriptions of Ireland, and the odd people he had seen, and before many weeks John brought to the general amusement-fund, an illustrated volume of "Tales and Sketches" drawn from that best benefactor of poor young men, "The Mercantile Library Association." Mrs. S. C. Hall was the charming writer, and her queer, idle, light-hearted,

countrymen were made full of interest to them by her graphic pen.

The intimacy so grew and flourished, that John soon ventured to poke sly fun at the "sez I's" and "sez ye's" which strung together Pat's narratives.

"Clovis," said Hafferty, in confidence, "do I everlastingly fetch in those words?"

"Watch yourself," replied Clovis, laughing; "you will soon find out."

"Faith, and I will, then," replied Pat. "I did not graduate from Dublin's good school to be made game of by blatherin' Yankees. Bad luck to me for bringing disgrace on me Alma Mater."



CHAPTER XXV.

BLOSSOM-BUD SINGS PRAISES.



HE Winter passed quickly away. Mother Bunch thought it best for Clovis to take again his handsome watch; and he was so delighted to hear it tick, that he put it to his ear every five minutes, the first day he wore it.

The dame was regularly paid for keeping the young folks; and she often declared she wondered how she could have borne to live her lonesome life in the hut before they came.

Blossom-bud straightened up, slim and tall, and her face filled out and rounded, and she had pretty dimples in cheeks and chin. The only feature which retained its old expression was her mouth, which would sometimes droop sorrowfully at the corners, though her lips were red, and she had learned to smile brightly, and to feel gay.

As her sensibilities quickened, and her mind unfolded, she realized keenly her defects, and longed to become worthy of the companionship of her two genteel friends; she soon noticed the difference in their language, and general behavior, and desired to be like them. "Bully, and golly," dropped out of her daily talk; she learned to read and write, and had made sufficient progress to get pleasure from books which Clovis occasionally bought her; such as "Robinson Crusoe," "Midsummer Eve," "The Magic Ring," "Norse Tales," and "Theodolph, the Icelfander," Clovis being directed and helped in his selections by John Rexford.

Some she read to please herself, others, that she could be able to find the same thoughts in her mind

her pretty boy (as she still called him) had in his, and that she might talk about them with him.

She was tireless in her industry, and evinced the most intense pleasure in the quaint Methodist hymns Mother Bunch was accustomed to sing at her work. She readily caught the airs, and it became quite a steady part of their evening's occupation to join their voices in "Jerusalem, the Golden," "A charge to keep, I have," or, "While shepherds watched their flocks by night." Sometimes the others would drop into silence to listen to Blossom-bud's sweet notes, pure and true as a bird's.

Those winter evenings in the humble old hut, kept their influence on the whole of Clovis' after life; they deepened and poised his religious feelings; they sweetened his temper, and helped him to bear the changes which came after.

The dame being a devout Christian, she insisted on taking her young folks regularly to her church of a Sunday.

"I shall have you to come," said she, "it is a good habit to make; you must respect holy days, and learn God's laws. You will not be tempted to roam abroad on the Lord's day, getting into mischief, among bad companions; it will bind up your two hearts so close with mine, that they can never be sundered; for

what says Scripture? 'A three-fold cord is not easily broken; Mispah.' "

At first it was hard for a little vagabond street child, like Blossom-bud, who had lived under no rules, who had never seen the inside of a church, and she found it exceedingly tiresome to sit still through the long sermons: but as soon as she got an idea of the tunes, and found she might join in singing them, she was willing to go—and she learned the Bible lesson the Dame exacted—at first for love of the dear old teacher, and afterward for the pleasure she got out of the precious and sweet promises to just such poor needy ones, as she.

Blossom-bud's trade was thriving. She had one steady customer; scarcely a day passed that Lily Bell did not come to her stand, sometimes with Miss Squelcher (under protest), oftener with her papa. The visits she made with him were most absolutely enjoyable, because he never hurried her away too soon, nor reproached her with her low fondness for riff-raff and skiff-skuff. On the contrary he let her linger and loiter, and hear all about the philanthropist.

Blossom-bud soon found out her Silver Dollar's interest in their mutual friend, and she delighted to recall and recount all trifles pertaining to him. So

the daughter of the proud and fashionable Mrs. Bell was much more within the influence of the hut circle than her own, so exclusive and elegant. She would no doubt have been excessively shocked to learn how the cash-boy and the spider girl were dwelling nearer her honest little heart, than the beautiful Miss Katrina Von Lombardy, whose graces and styles she was forever holding up as a model and pattern.

Mr. Bell was taken into Lily's confidence, and flowers from his greenhouse were added to the young vender's merchandise, because it pleased his Birdie better to see her friend with buds and blossoms in her fingers than the ugly red arachne, and she loved the song she chanted as she offered them to passers-by :

"Come look at my roses, smell at my posies,
Buy some of my pinks, pretty lady, I pray.
A fresh mignonette, a hyacinth blue,
A heliotrope and crocus-bud, I have for you."

I never rightly knew whether this street girl worked up the ditty by constant repetition and love of rhythm, or whether Lily helped her, but the air was one of Mother Bunch's plaintive melodies, which aptly fitted the words and her voice, and attracted much attention, besides bringing a great increase of customers. The gentle modesty of the

slender singer, her pleasant deftness and thankful manner, gained her profitable favor.

John Rexford went often past her stand of a morning, and though he had no overplus for luxuries, he sometimes appeared at his desk with a bunch of buds in his button-hole, or a dainty sprig of jessamine. He never got further in his acquaintance with the girl, than a pleasant good-morning, because, true to Mother Bunch's instructions, she was careful not to enter into any talks with young men. So, though many stared, and might have trifled willingly with the street girl, she was so modest and retiring, that they were not able to interest her beyond the business of her calling.

She did not wish to change the fashion of her headgear, but she before long, returned to Mother Bunch Nan's kerchief, and replaced it with a fresh one. And it, and the rest of the lent clothes, were carefully laid back into the sea-chest, with the Bible, and the long curl of fair hair.

There was one fastidious creature, whose visits Blossom-bud dreaded. The squeamish Squelcher, being obliged to accompany her charge in her airings, was thus forced into an atmosphere of vulgar lowness she disdained ; and she sniffed so hard, and was so waspish, that she spoiled much of the pleasure of

the two girls. And poor Lily dared not hug and kiss her friend in the presence of the respectable instructor of youth, as she felt free to do when her papa was her indulgent companion.

Miss Squelcher frowned and stormed. She ridiculed and remonstrated, but finding she could make no head against the skiff-scuff and riff-raff, she complained to Mr. Bell. And afterwards she wished she had either carried the affair to the fashionable wife, or held her tongue; for she got such a sharp reproof from the merchant, that poor Lily did not come out of the shadow of her irritation and revenge for days afterwards. She was so fertile in methods to make the child's life a burden to her, that at last she could no longer endure, and went weeping to her father. Then a storm burst on the head of the governess, like the fire and tempest of a comet's tail over our earth, in the driftage. After which she was glad to cease hostilities, that she might get leave to live in laziness; and as it was arranged that she seldom accompanied Lily on her flower-errands, the rich and the poor had better times together.

It was hard for Lily to keep Clovis' secret from her dear father, to whom she confided all her thoughts and wishes, especially as a day rarely passed

that she did not meet and greet the cash-boy in the store; and never an evening went by with Birdie in her nest, that he was not commented on, and talked over.

Mr. Bell asked no questions leading to such a disclosure. Perhaps he did not need to ask any for information, but he listened with complacency to all she had to say, and enjoyed her enthusiasm over him and Blossom-bud.

It was a curious sort of acquaintance all around, and it did the three good. The small lady learned how to help—she found out that giving money is not the only, or the best way to aid the poor. The street girl learned to fight fortune, to struggle on and up, that she might get nearer to her two patterns of excellence; and as for Clovis, he was very fast acquiring the knowledge of the best qualities which make a true man.

For a long while Blossom-bud was afraid to lose sight of Mother Bunch, and would tremble if she heard a screeching voice, or saw a fat, flabby, dirty woman approaching. Fancying a hundred times a day, that old Gruffy's claws were hurting her fair flesh with the savage grip she could not forget; and her dreams were often made dreadful through her memories of suffering, so that good Mother Bunch was fain to hold her, and hush her sobs. But as the

safe days were many, and the present happiness of her life so abounding as to drive out her past, she got courage and boldness, and would sometimes venture up the street, or around the corner, with her wares; and she assured her friends, and fully believed herself, that she was forever free from her crafty old enemy, and would bravely maintain her right to her precious liberty, no matter what might happen.



CHAPTER XXVI.

NOBODY'S BOB.



T was very early in the spring that Clovis and Blossom-bud had a day they never forgot in the whole of their lives.

Miss Lily Bell, in one of her visits to the store, found Clovis devouring butter-scotch and toffee, and she was pleased to discover a way in which she could minister to his enjoyments. Her gifts had been limited to flowers, which were gracefully accepted, and shared with John and Pat Hafferty.

"Oh what a foolish little thing I am!" exclaimed Lily, "never to think that boys love candy, too

and this is Saturday, and I have come for you. My papa says you are to go, and I have two boxes of French bon-bons ; one will do for Blossom-bud and you shall immediately eat the other."

"As you please, Miss Lily," answered Clovis, "all small favors thankfully received."

"Come, then, behind the old lay figure, and begin. Look, taste, are not the cherries nice?"

Mr. Bell sought them in their favorite corner, and stopped to watch his beneficent little fairy doling out her goodies, one by one, and laughed heartily.

"You must not spoil all his nooning, Birdie; he must get his dinner."

"But, papa, he is dining now, and you said he was to go with me ; don't you remember, to that place we agreed upon?"

"Ah, yes, so I did. Miss Lily desires your attendance this afternoon, Clovis ; and I suppose I shall have to spare you."

"This is the last one," said Lily, fishing up a candied plum ; "eat it quick, and let us go."

She led the way to the carriage, in which Miss Squelcher was primly seated, and he entered without a word of comment or a single question.

The governess gasped for breath, and looked terribly shocked to have a little vulgar boy, a cash,

badged and numbered, seated in front of her; but Lily was in a serene good humor, full of smiles and chat.

Clovis felt himself quite at home in the luxurious carriage, in spite of Miss Squelcher. The turnout, though handsome, was not so stylish as his mother's, and as they bowled along, a memory of the pleasant drives he used to take among the pretty romantic scenes around Roaring River, with his dainty twin beside him, as Lily was sitting now, and his dear, dear mother opposite, where he could catch every smile of her kind, comely face, mingled with Lily's voice, so that he awoke with a start when the horses drew up at the curb, and he espied Blossombud standing before the old church, in a sorrowful pose, with an arm on the iron-railing, and the other hand holding a bunch of flowers, dropped listlessly by her side.

It was no very vital grief, however, which saddened the girl's face. Her sales had been light that morning, and as she saw her pretty roses wilting in their basket, and only a few dimes in the box, the new merino she ardently desired seemed a long, long way off.

It must be owned that Blossombud was beginning to develop a fondness for dress. She loved

bright colors, such as she found in her hyacinths and pansies, and a wonderful blue fabric she had seen in her last walk with Clovis had entirely captivated her fancy ; she felt that with a gown of that, and a white ruffled apron, she could look very nice indeed. She had not ventured to breathe such a thought to Mother Bunch, and had set in her mind a certain sum she must have before she could find courage. In fact it was only a dream at the best, not likely to be realized; still she counted each day her gains, hoping and hoping.

The light touch of Lily's hand made her instantly alert, and all her pretty dimples showed, and her eyes gladdened and brightly glowed at the sight of her well-beloved Silver Dollar.

From his stand at the carriage door, Clovis watched their proceedings with much curiosity. Lily spoke hurriedly and with great animation, seizing her friend's hand and pulling her along. Then the two went down and made an appeal to Mother Bunch, who shook her head at first, but seemed to yield to Lily's entreaties and Blossom-bud's mutely begging eyes, she nodded a great many times as the two clasped her wrinkled old neck in a glad hug : and slowly rising she toddled up and helped to bring the girl's wares, and place them in safety near her

chair. Blossom-bud lingered a moment, looking at her, and she placed a hand fondly on the pretty head in the silk kerchief, and touched lightly also the clear brow of the rich man's daughter. Clovis knew that Mother Bunch was sending away with a blessing both the young creatures, who looked so happy, and who came eagerly running toward him, hand in hand.

It was a little bit of life, like a quaint picture on the crowded, noisy street, which he wanted John Rexford to see, and whose tenderness and dainty prettiness he smilingly enjoyed.

Miss Squelcher made herself even more like a rail than usual as they all got into the carriage, and she put on a countenance of transcendent loftiness and disdain. She had her refined emotions all to herself, however, for the girls concerned themselves not a whit about her or her feelings.

Blossom-bud was pleasantly occupied, in a minute examination of the carriage, its ivory handles, card-holder, satin linings, and other wonders; she pulled the tassel which sent the silken curtains flying on their magic springs, and her eyes grew round with astonishment. She put her arm through the strap and reclined in an attitude of intense ease and relaxation about a minute. She peered into

the mirror, and laughed to see Lily's merry face behind hers. She experimented with the speaking tube; and Adolphus, the splendid coachman, pulled in his steeds with a jerk, venting some gutturals which probably were low Dutch; afterwards, and finally subsided blissfully quiet, breathing into her friend's ear, in a soft whisper:

"Oh, Silver Dollar! I am riding in a carriage; how I wish Bob could see me."

You may believe that the young philanthropist was charmed with the success of her project to give the street girl pleasure. She watched every motion in absolute enjoyment, and clapped her hands, saying "Oh, Clovis, isn't she funny? Don't you love to see her go on." But the reference to Bob made Lily quite sober again, and very wistful. She knew how the heart of Blossom-bud ached after the other waif who had shared her privations, and that the certainty that he was still a comfortless vagrant often saddened her amidst her comforts and new-found blessings. The two rarely met but some allusion was made to Bob, who got in Lily's mind to be quite a wonderful fellow, hearing so much of his gentleness and gaiety; how he shared his poor food with the companion who hated to beg, and shielded her when he could both from old Gruffy and rough

outcasts like himself. She often ardently longed to find her friend's lost comrade, and restore him to her; she frequently looked among the scamps she met in her walks and drives, hoping to discover one "blue-eyed and merry, nice teeth, always laughing." This was the description she had to guide her search, and whenever she espied a frolicsome rogue, in tatters and rags, she wanted to cry out, "are you Bob?" She planned many satisfactions to be experienced when he was found.

But, alas! poor Lily; she once had her enthusiasm damped, and her hopes discouraged in a very cruel manner, and to a degree which quite disheartened her.

Being one day left in the carriage while Miss Squelcher made some purchases, she observed a group of gamins on the corner, not far off—shoe-blacks, errand boys, and the like—and among them a couple of strolling musicians one, a harper; the other a sturdy little fiddler, who sang at the top of his voice:

"Father, dear father, come home with me now."
A man who might have been the identical parent in question, paused to hear his song to the end, and pulling a coin from the pocket of his seedy coat, threw it into the Tam O'Shanter cap, extended to

receive it, and, wiping his eyes with a dirty old handkerchief, he said :

“Look out, lad, how you ever touch a drop of liquor. I have been a rich man ! I had horses and houses ! and I had a handsome wife. Ah ! John Nickson ! She was your curse—she is still.”

After he was gone, the fiddler, who was quite sober, and sorry for a moment, began to kick up his heels, saying, “hang care, he killed a cat,” while he bit the coin, to see if it was genuine.

He was blue-eyed, and he had nice teeth, and he laughed. Lily's heart beat quick, and when the harper called him “Bob ;” she could no more forbear ; leaping down, she flitted toward the lad, and stopped close at his side.

“Are you not Blossom-bud's Bob ?” asked she seriously and anxiously.

All the ragamuffins ceased their pranks, and gathered about the little lady, alive with curiosity.

“Was you wanting anything of me, miss ?” asked the fiddler, who gazed in surprise and admiration at the dainty young beauty, in her white plumes and furs. “I'm afeard I didn't sense you, quite.”

“You look like Blossom-bud's Bob ; he is blue-eyed and gay ; he is also good and kind. I hope you are, so that I can take you to her, and make

her truly glad ; and you shall come in my carriage."

"Yes, oh yes ; that's me, just," answered the fiddler, grinning and winking at the others, who shouted and stamped. "Do you hear that now ! ye dirty beggars, I'm to be took in the lady's grand kerredge !"

"Hooray for dirty Bob ! Squeecker Bob ! widout iver a coat to his back ; he's got a sweetheart. I say, miss, we're all on us Bobs ; look once more before ye take yer pick," cried the harper, who squeezed himself nearer to Lily, and began to crowd, and elbow, and bustle the fiddler out of his way.

That was a signal for the others to hoot and shout, and screech, and leap about, saucy and impudent, and Lily seized the grimy hand of the lad she had tried to identify, clinging to him in affright.

"Don't let them hurt me !" implored she. "Oh, I was in hopes you were Bob ; *he* is good."

"I ain't bad neither, pretty miss," replied he, warding off the rest. "You ain't safe here, though ! Leave the little lady alone now, will you ! I'll have to fight some of you, if you don't. There now ! You don't know me, nor I don't know you. I ain't nobody's Bob. I wish I was, but I ain't ! No such luck—run now ! they sha'n't hurt you. Quick, into

your grand kerridge. Oh, Lord! What a pity—what a pity.”

In the midst of the hullaballo, which Adolphus serenely and majestically contemplated from his lofty perch, as no concern of his, Miss Squelcher emerged from the store, amazing stiff and select. She was vehemently disgusted by the dirt and rags in her road; and gathered together her skirts, and looked askance, lest she should seem interested in such low creatures.

She was seated in the carriage before she became aware that Lily was missing. Her more refined agitations were turned into fright and alarm; but when gazing up and down in hasty search, she descried her in the midst of the skiff-scuff and riff-raff, her French-gloved hand clasped in the dirtiest one of the crowd, she was so overwhelmed, that she had hardly strength to step out and pounce on the offender.

Fending off the roaring roughs, the fiddler was carefully withdrawing the frightened philanthropist from this dangerous neighborhood, and he lifted her into the carriage, throwing her handsome purse into her lap, before the instructor of youth had collected her scattered senses, rudely upset by the queer proceeding.

"They bounced it, miss," said he, laughing. "In course they couldn't help it, sticking out of yer handsome jacket so convenient, but I ain't agoin' to have ye robbed if I wasn't the Bob yer after. Thankin' ye fer the kind thought, and wishin' ye better luck."

Could it be possible? Yes, it was. The rude ragged stroller actually picked off his cap, and kissed his hand.

Lily kissed hers in return, in spite of Miss Squelcher. "I thank you for not letting those cruel boys hurt me. I *do* wish you could be Blossom-bud's Bob," said she plaintively, disappointed; and she gazed as long as she could see his blue eyes looking after the carriage.

But such a dreadful time as the philanthropist had returning home! Such a lecture as she got from the instructor of youth, on riff-raff and skiff-scuff!

Lily took it much to heart, because, although she was a single-minded, innocent girl, she had been so frightened by the gamins, that she felt the difference between purity and guilt, and realized some of the danger she had ventured into. She hardly dared tell her papa the occurrence, or her trouble. And his sober head shake, and serious "Birdie, Birdie, don't do that again," kept her from active searches after

her friend's friend. But she could not leave off studying all the blue-eyed, laughing countenances she met, nor earnestly desiring to restore to Blossom-bud the dear comrade she missed and mourned.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TICKET-OF-LEAVE MAN.



E left the young people in Mr. Bell's handsome barouche, a party of pleasure guarded by a most chaste duena, all whose snips and snaps on red kerchiefs and cash badges were lost and drowned in the noise of the wheels and the gay talk of the contented three, and when at last they were seated at Niblo's, Lily experienced all the delight she anticipated, in watching her guests, though Miss Squelcher turned her shoulder to them, and sat prim and transcendently exclusive.

Florence played his best role, Bob Brierly, and the street girl sat motionless, flushing and paling, as the convict bravely fought his hard fate, and her tears fell fast when the coarse mining-men refused

to let him work among them, and he fell away pale and despairing. Clovis felt very sorry for him, but his indignation rose so high against the cruel roughs that he roared out :

“Aren’t you ashamed ! I vow I wouldn’t treat a dog so”—and the actor, practiced as he was in feigning, could not repress a smile, as he singled out the eager boy, whose whole heart was in the play.

When the curtain fell after the third act, Blossom-bud was aroused by a laughing voice in the upper gallery, and she lifted her head, and her eyes anxiously sought for a face she knew, among the shoeblacks and ragamuffins, who were munching peanuts, and noisily applauding the performance.

She rose in wild haste. “Let me go,” said she, breathless and panting. “Oh, let me go to Bob ! I must speak to Bob.”

Clovis opened his mouth to laugh at her ; his own thoughts were busy with poor Brierly who needed help so much, and he held the girl fast by the hand.

“Sit down ; sit down,” he whispered ; “you can’t see *him*. Don’t be so excited ; it is only a play, after all. “Do hush !” he added, in shamefaced horror, at being the object of gazing eyes and amused smiles ; “everybody is looking at you.”

"But there is my Bob up there," cried she, pointing to the center figure of a noisy group. "I know he will be so glad! Do let me run to him. I'll come right back; only let me tell him how happy I am."

Forgetting everything else in her new joy, she waved her hand, and called out as loud, as she could:

"Bob! Bob! here I am. Look! oh! Bob! look!"

"Where is he?" shouted Clovis and Lily, in the same breath, understanding her at last, and so fully sharing her feelings as to care only for her. "Show me which one, and I'll run and fetch him"

"I see him," said Lily. "I know him; it *is* the Bob I found that day. I *was* right; the kind, good Bob who kissed his hand to me. Oh! go quickly, dear Clovis, and bring him here."

They watched and watched; they saw Clovis threading his way among the benches in the upper tier; he was near the fiddler; and then there was a shuffle and commotion, and Bob was gone.

Blossom-bud sank back and sobbed: "I have lost him! I cannot make him happy. I cannot help him to be good."

Miss Squelcher threatened to carry the girls off instantly, to give warning and leave—to do any-

thing except be sympathizing and agreeable, talking constantly in a scolding under-tone.

Blossum-bud uncovered her face and hushed her weeping to listen to her.

"I guess you never loved anybody," said she, "or you wouldn't act so, and I don't believe anybody ever loved you."

Lily held the girl's hand, and pressed it in hers.

"Blossom-bud," whispered she; "there is a way. If Mother Bunch should pray about it."

Their eyes met, and a smile of hope brightened both faces; and though they scanned vainly the crowd as they edged their way to the door, they did not despair; putting faith in the petition of the righteous which availeth much.

Good Mother Bunch had left her stand, and Lily took leave of her guests at the ferry, which they crossed together in the waning light.

The tide was swelling in, and lapped and beat the black piles with sullen, remorseless splashings. The long line of gray sand past which their road lay, was covered deeper and deeper with every swirl of the encroaching waves. A few bright stars were out, and the limpid clearness of a young moon brightened their way with a pale radiance, and silvered the white caps, and the snowy breasts of the

sea-gulls, still dipping and wheeling above the bay, seeking food for their callow broods. There was yet a glow above the distant cliffs, and a trail of yellow light across the heavens, a remembered glory of the departed sun. The hut garden was beginning to spring into leaves and plants, and as they approached they felt the cool moisture of the damp earth, and the faint sweet scent of the fresh mignonne and pansies greeted them like a welcome home.

Blossom-bud had scarcely spoken all the way, and there was a mingling of puzzled pain and impatient, expectant, wild longing in her face, which quite startled the dame as she undid the door, and drew her dove into her ark of safety. The new thoughts and emotions of her afternoon were shimmering over the child, brightening her eyes, and curving her pretty lips, and she went about her evening duties with new alacrity and thankfulness, which made her wonderfully pleasant.

It took a long time to tell the whole interesting story ; and Mother Bunch wept and laughed during the recital.

"If that is what they do in the play-house, said she, "it is not so bad; but mind, they are not for you. See how foolish I am, to grieve and cry over the

made-up story, when I have need of all the sympathy I can spare for real woes."

She attentively listened to the girl's account of the Bob lost before he was found, and she offered a fervent prayer for the homeless vagabond, which comforted Blossom-bud's heart and inspired great trust in its prevailing efficacy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AS PLUMP AS A PLUM.



EARLY Monday morning the three started out according to their daily custom. The girl was still full of the play she had seen. She told them how she would have sold flowers, and sung songs, supposing her Bob to be Brierly; and she trilled out a measure now and then, caught from pretty May, begging in the drinking-house, with her guitar. She was gay and chatty, and so full of love for Mother Bunch, that she quite quilted her dear old cheeks into wrinkles with broad smiles. She frolicked and danced so merrily while helping to arrange the fruit

stand that she got a warning with the fond hug the old dame could not help giving her:

"Be careful, lass, girls that are so jocund of a morning, are over apt to weep with the nightfall."

"But not I, dear mother; I feel as if I could never weep again."

Their joint labor complete, and the apple-woman seated ready for customers, Clovis bade her good-bye, and Blossom-bud walked a little way on to her own place, still discussing the wonderful pleasure they had enjoyed through Silver Dollar, and thoughtfully, and with rapt admiration the girl listened to her friend's visionary plans, of a great treat he would give, when he was a rich merchant; how he would buy a hundred places, for a hundred children, and start them all at once to see Mr. Florence do Bob Brierly, and how in the intermission he would send around a stylish servant in white, with baskets of sweet cakes and spiced buns.

Half a dozen times that day Clovis opened his lips to talk to Mr. Rexford and Pat Hafferty about Blossom-bud and the boy she loved so dearly; but he checked his speech, because, if he mentioned her at all, he must explain the hut life, which he had never yet felt like touching. But she was more constantly in his thoughts than usual, and he very ar-

dently and sincerely wished that he knew how to make her truly and entirely like Clotilde and Pauline, and for the first time he soberly considered whether he could humble himself to the home-folks who so willingly neglected and abandoned him, for her sake, and if his mother *would* in that case, permit a street girl to share Clotilde's advantages, and take her into her competent and loving care.

He hurried from the store at night, still pondering the case, and rushed breathless into the hut.

The dame was making some rusk toast over the stove; and she turned a surprised look on him, missing what she expected him to bring.

"Where's Blossom-bud?" asked the lad, disappointed not to see her sweet face, or hear her cry of welcome.

"I was just going to ask you that," answered Mother Bunch. "I have been expecting her every minute for half an hour; I thought maybe she stayed for you, that you might laugh and chat as you did in the merry morning."

"I came another way," said Clovis. "I have been out since three, with parcels, and I am just fit to drop. Don't set on the supper yet; it will not half taste, without her, will it?"

"I declare! I'm almost sorry I left her behind,"

said the dame, peering out of the dim little window, "but I wanted to go to my prayer-meeting; so I packed up about four o'clock. The dear lass had not near sold out, and she often has a brisk trade as the sun sets with the folks that is a going to the play-houses. She's just sot her heart on that there blue frock. I never encourage her in spriggin' up, but she's a pretty young creatur, girls will be girls, there's no use tryin to go agin natur. Deary me! how dreadful dark it is a gettin! She didn't ought to stop away so long. I do wish she'd come!"

The night dropped gloomy and grim, the rising wind stirred the sedges in the sluggish creek below, where the tide ebbed and flowed, and shook and rattled the loose shingles over their heads. The harmless little brown lizzard that had been sunning itself all day on the rock crept into a crevice and went to sleep, and the crafty gray rats came out and commenced to prowl. Vile wretches, whose deeds would not bear the light, began to come forth, while the distant church-bells called good Christians to to their prayers. The screeching whistles of a couple of steamships coming to anchor challenged each other like huge monsters snorting defiance; and the industrious little ferries kept plying back and forth, but brought no Blossom-bud. The watchers

watched in vain ; the door-latch was not lifted ; the supper was not eaten.

"Something has happened to my dear," moaned the dame ; "my poor child is in trouble. Help us, good Lord ! Thy waves have gone over our hearts ! Anguish is in our souls."

"Mother ! what *shall* we do ?" whispered Clovis ; "tell me ! where shall I seek her ?"

"Oh, where in this wicked, wicked world is a safe place for the tender flower except in my poor arms," said she. "Alas ! I cannot tell."

"Don't cry, mother, I'll run to my policeman. He will know just what to do."

Clovis darted out, and found—disappointment. The officer was off duty, and the frightened lad wandered up and down, his soul stunned with this new blow. Sometimes he fancied that he heard her plaintive voice just before him. A knot of roughs were squabbling, scuffling and yelling in a dark alley, and a small, hapless thing, in torn rags, was among them, rudely pushed and jostled. Clovis's heart thumped so hard he could scarcely breathe, and he feared and dreaded to approach ; but it was not the pretty spider-girl. A lost and fallen creature—drunken and debauched — so far on the road to death in a ditch that it made him sorry and ashamed

to see how she was disgracing her womanhood. He hurried from the sickening spectacle, more alarmed and anxious than ever.

The heavy night wore away in fruitless, aimless, search, and at day-dawn he returned once again to the hut, hoping against hope that Blossom-bud might have arrived during his absence ; but the dame sat over the stove moaning and weeping, and she cried out with an exceeding bitter cry when she saw him coming still alone.

The boy who, a few months ago, had been the care of a careful mother, who never lay down on her own bed till she had seen him in his, admiring his slumber-beauty, praying over him, tucking him in, making note of all his surroundings, lest the very winds of Heaven might too roughly visit his repose, was quite worn out with fatigue and anxiety ; and while Mother Bunch talked with him he fell asleep in the chair he had drawn close to her that he might find a little comfort in holding her hand and hearing her pray for the poor young innocent a queer chance or a good Providence had thrown upon his sympathies and cares, and whom he tenderly loved. He never realized *how* tenderly, till now she was lost.

But work must be done till the skies fall, and the

weeping dame neglected no plain duties. The poor cannot permit to themselves the luxury of *idle* grief, and she went silently and softly about the hut, tidying the place, trying to strengthen her faith with the good promises of her Bible, while she made a breakfast for her remaining child, whose sorrow was her sorrow, before she sent him out to battle with a new day.

"I shall go first to the Police Station, Clovis," said she, as they started, "mayhap she's missed her way and been picked up." But though she spoke in a steady voice he knew she was only trying to coax herself and him. She could not for the world have breathed the dread thought which lay a fearful weight on her soul, filling it with keenest anguish.

As they crossed the ferry, Clovis shuddered. Down in the turbid water he saw something white swish in and out among the slimy piles, his fancy formed it into a hand and arm thrown up by the foam from the wheel; but it was only a bit of rag caught in the black wood.

He hated to part from Mother Bunch, and his road seemed long and tiresome. As he passed Blossom-bud's favorite stand he drew his hand across his tired eyes. If he could but hear a note of

her blithe carol ! but catch a glimpse of her dimpled face !

A glimmer of hope was still left : his friend the officer might know how and where to look. To his intense joy the blue coat and brass buttons were right ahead of him, and the man inside the wadding greeted him cheerfully, attentively listening while he poured out his trouble and his needs in such a fast-flowing stream of words that their hearer had close work to follow them.

"All right, my boy," said he, "you go your way. Rest as easy as you can. What I can do, I'll do with a will, and no man can set sharper chaps to work than I can. If the girl is lost she will soon be found. If she—well never mind, wait till you know for certain."

By the time Clovis reached the store he made up his mind to ask a day's leave. He had never missed any time, or begged any privileges, and felt almost sure of being let off. Unfortunately, Mr. Lambe met him at the door. He was the partner who did the scolding and fault-finding for the firm, and seemed thoroughly at home in the business.

"Late, are you, boy. All wrong ! report fifteen minutes. I won't have laggards around me. If you can't be punctual to a second, and that a second

before the time, you won't suit. Do you hear? you won't suit!"

"All right, Mr. Lambe. I'd as lief be early as late when I can. A very extraordinary thing detained me this morning. I want to get the day out, I want it bad."

"The coolness of that! Commend me to a lazy cash for sheer impudence! And who is to do your tasks while you are galivanting? No, indeed, march to your place, and step lively too!"

Even if Clovis had requested a holiday to amuse himself; he would have been indignant at the tone and manner of this refusal. He was never sparing of his muscle or his time, nor backward about picking up other boys' work when the need came. He had a great mind to mutiny, and only the thought that Mr. Bell would listen to and befriend him, kept him on, but his feelings showed so plainly in his tell-tale face that Mr. Lambe was much incensed and provoked by its belligerent expression.

"Wear a better countenance than that, you impudent young scamp," cried he, scowling, "or you'll get into trouble."

"Sorry my features don't please you, sir," retorted Clovis; "they are the best my folks could

afford me," and off he stalked, his head up, and his freckled cheeks blazing red. "Supposing I was a born lamb, or any other scum of the earth, he couldn't have been meaner to me," muttered he. "I vow I wouldn't treat a dog so."

"If that wasn't the sharpest, cutest, swiftest, jolliest young imp I've got in the place, I'd turn him up right now—Bell or no Bell," said the merchant, wrathfully eyeing the defiant pose of the cash's head. "Saucy rascal! how I should like to sprout him! Confound his brazen impudence!"

Clovis had, before this, had occasion to prove the trust of the proverb: "a favorite has no friends;" the other lads were jealous of the kindness he received from his patron's fair daughter, though her visits were always in his own nooning time, and wronged nobody. There were mean spiteful natures among the salesmen, who enviously regarded his friendship with John Rexford, and his admission to the office; and he was flouted and chaffed by one and another, on occasions when it was hard to keep down his hot, hasty temper, and remember his promise to Mr. Bell.

The door-boy was especially aggravating. He had a habit of cramming his dirty fist into his

mouth, and goggling his eyes, which nearly set Clovis mad.

"Mr. Rexford," exclaimed he, one day, after he had been a cash a couple of weeks, "I cannot stand that cub out there, much longer ; he makes me sick !"

"Softly ! softly, Clovis, my king. Why shout your royal words so loudly in mine ears ? The milder gentler tones better become your majesty's noble nature. As to the 'cub,' he is ill named ; the youthful bear is an honest beast, and lives up to all the lights he has. Bibbs is an ungodly reprobate ; but he has a good old mother, who depends on his wages for daily food ; she is a cripple ; and has one of the most uncouth, distorted countenances I ever beheld. I have thought of asking her to sit to me for a gnome ; but, with all its misproportionate ugliness, it is a benevolent, kind, good-humored face ; and I know she is a prayerful Christian soul, deserving a better son. He is a degenerate plant of a strange vine. I am well aware that he worries and torments you. I have seen it often ; but you must try to live above such trifles. You can if you will ; think how tenderly *you* were raised ; and what a pinched, meager life he and his must have had for generations, to develop such repulsiveness of

mind and body. If Bibbs loses his situation, his mother may starve."

"I do love to hear you talk, Mr. Rexford; you are such a trump. Think of there being a lot of boys, one after another—each one homelier than the last, till, finally, comes Bibbs! I guess I can keep my mouth and fists in order, when I realize that it was hard times that made him so bad."

Most unfortunately Bibbs was in the hat-room when Clovis entered, after his pleasant little chat with Mr. Lambe, and Bibbs immediately began to be sprightly; sticking out his leg, so that Clovis nearly tripped over it.

"Excuse me, Bibbs," said Clovis. "If you could make your feet a little smaller."

Thereupon Bibbs immediately swallowed his fist, with horrible relish, and Clovis, whose nerves were all on the outside, was betrayed into an angry remonstrance.

"Don't make a hejus monster of yourself, Bibbs! enough to sicken the old scratch. You ought to get Lambe to furnish you a looking-glass."

"Say that again, Miss Nancy, and I'll smash yer ugly mug," retorted Bibbs, delighted that he was able to stir Clovis up to the speaking-point. "You're a

good for nothing sneak ! you dass'ent fight—all the fellows knows it ; ye dassent."

"Dassent!" repeated Clovis, squaring his elbows. "I'll let you know whether I dare."

"Come on, Nancy ! why don't you hit me," screamed Bibbs, hopping back and forth on his spindle legs, and making horrible faces.

Mr. Bell entered the room just in time to catch his door-boy with his fist in unpleasant proximity to Clovis's nose.

"Who talks of hitting?" said he, giving Bibbs a smart ear tap, and pushing him aside. "What ! Clovis, is it possible that you are fighting?"

"I hav'n't commenced yet, sir ; but I shall have to settle this Bibbs. I'm just outdone with his tricks and his manners ; he makes my blood boil. You don't want me to keep still and let him nag, nag, all all the while, and be called a coward besides. I'd have licked him long ago if it hadn't been for you."

"Did you strike the boy, Clovis?" asked the merchant, so solemnly and sorrowfully, that Clovis got back his senses, and remembered what he was about.

"No, sir," said he, dropping his hands.

"Think a moment, my boy; are you ready to be

turned on the street to shift for yourself? Are you ready to leave *me*, Clovis?"

"Oh, Mr. Bell," exclaimed Clovis, ruefully, "it is such a long time since you was a boy. I don't believe you remember how it felt to have a dirty scamp bully you, and not lick him."

"I am sometimes provoked, even now," replied Mr. Bell, smiling, "but I don't let my temper get the best of me. You will have to keep your arms in order if you care to be my boy any longer."

"Thank you ever so much for putting it that way, sir. I shall try not to offend *you*."

"As for Bibbs," said the merchant, turning sternly to the door-tender, "I think I'll send *you* off. I have noticed a good deal of wanton meanness in you; I have found occasion to speak to you before. You have had a fair trial, and I don't find that you improve. You may take your cap and start."

Bibbs hung his head and slouched away without a word, and Clovis looked after him, thinking what John Rexford said about the good old cripple who depended on her son's wages to keep her from starvation.

"Now, I have done that chap an ill turn," said he, regretfully. I'm sure I didn't mean to. Oh!

why couldn't you let me drub him, and not seem to notice."

"Because I hate fighting, Clovis. I am a peace man. Once you get started on that road, and before long you will be carrying pistols and knives, and be popping and slashing at everybody who may happen to affront you. It is a sort of chivalry I take no stock in. I'll see that you keep your head cool till it gets sense enough to control your too ready hands, while I have the care of you."

"It is good of you to take the trouble, as long as there *are* folks living who don't consider me worth looking after," said Clovis, bitterly. "But that is nothing. Bibbs has got a good mother; Mr. Rexford says so, he knows her. She will have to suffer if her cub don't bring her any money. She is fond of him, horrid as he is, I dare say. Some mothers don't seem to care much for their boys, according to my experience. Let Bibbs stay, Mr. Bell, it is tough to feel hungry. I can't be comfortable, and know that I am the means of getting a poor old cripple into such trouble."

"I am glad you can speak for him when he has badgered and teased you so much. Oh, yes, I am well posted in all your small trials, and the way in which you have met them. After all, he did not actually

come within the statute, and if he begs your pardon and promises to keep the peace, I will retain him. But mind, Clovis, I couldn't break over my rule, even for a boy I respect as much as I do you. When you fight a battle your time is up. You may go after Bibbs if you choose and bring him here."

Gladly accepting the errand, Clovis soon overtook his enemy, who was twirling his cap at the desk, waiting for his wages.

"Just you look out, Nancy, when I ketch you out doors, won't I pay off all I owe?" whispered he, covertly doubling his fists.

"Mr. Bell sent me for you," said Clovis, eagerly. "He wishes you to come directly back to the hat room, where he is waiting to speak to you."

"So is your granny," retorted Bibbs. "You kin toddle right off and tell him I'm a goin' to dine along of the Tammany ring, sorry to disappoint him."

"But he *did*, Bibbs; he told me to fetch you."

"Fetch your Aunt Sally Betsey as much!" Bibbs pulled down an eye in the unpleasant way rough boys understand and practice. "See anything green?" asked he, scoffingly.

"I tell you he means to give you another chance, and if you want to keep your situation you had bet

ter lose no' time," said Clovis, trying very hard to be civil.

Bibbs eyed him askance. "I believe you are lying," said he, "you'd like to fool me, and I know you are glad he give me walkin' papers."

"You are much mistaken," replied Clovis, "I've heard why you need all you can earn; and though I don't think much of *you* I should hate to plague your mother, who is a good woman."

Clovis walked off, and after watching him a minute, Bibbs slowly followed.

Mr. Bell insisted on a full apology and a promise of future good conduct, as the price of restoration, and though the ugly lad made it humbly enough he thrust his tongue into the cheek next his well-meaning mediator while he said the words, and as soon as Mr. Bell was out of hearing, he recited with provoking gestures the following elegant couplet :

"Beg your pardon, grant you grace,
I hope the cat will scratch your face,"

and added consolingly, "Mind your eye, you pigeon-toed old mud-sucker, or I'll lam you yet."

His day had commenced so inauspiciously that Clovis no longer felt like asking favors, and he kept about his work as faithfully as usual, but he was all

while thinking, "Oh, I wonder if Blossom-bud and ! Shall I ever see her again !"

CHAPTER XXIX.

AS PURE AS THE ANGELS.



HE pretty vender of spiders and roses scarcely felt lonely after Mother Bunch left her on the corner. A couple of ladies stopped to purchase a posy of "buds and bells;" a lawyer, on his way to dine with the judge, took a button-hole boquet; a couple of school-girls bought all her violets, and she put away the money joyfully, letting her thoughts run on the blue dress for herself and a check apron for the dame which she was nearly ready to purchase.

She raised her clear voice in a sweet call of attention to her wares:

"Come look at my roses, smell of my posies."

"Thank ye, darling," said a greasy, flabby old woman, who had been watching her off and on for an hour or more, while the crowds pushed past. "Yer old Gruffy loves good smells, as much as she

does smart girls. Oh, yes. I'll take a smell, and a look ; and I'll take a feel, too ; won't I, deary ?"

Blossom-bud turned her head, with a faint scream, as the thick tones smote her ear, and the horny fingers she could never forget, gripped fast and hard her arm ; she longed to fly, but had no power ; her heart stopped beating, and her knees knocked together.

"I knowed I was right. I was sure it was my lost child, for all she's growed so fat and tall, and got sprigged up so fine. A lucky day has dawned for your old Gruffy, at last. I've always kept a looking. I couldn't abear to think I shouldn't never have her no more. I said, patience ! you'll light on her sooner or later. Nobody can hide from Gruffy. So pick up the nice red spiders and bring 'em along ; seems just like they was me ; and you was the tender little fly agoin' into my web. Don't pull away and tear the new frock that I'll sell to-morrow. Don't try to get loose, or I shall have to pinch harder."

"Let me go !" implored the girl. "I am not yours ; you shall not take me ! It is time I was at home."

"So it is, deary ; full time, and come quickly, or you will make it the worst for your soft skin.

The good whip hangs in the old place ; if you dare to open your throat, you'll have a taste of it. I don't like noisy girls. Dear ! dear, how plump she is ! What a deal of victuals it must have took to put so much fat on bare bones ! Such an ungrateful Blossom-bud, to run away, and leave her bestest friend, and make her weep and wail for lack of her. That is over now, deary ; you *shall* go home."

The poor, frightened child turned hither and thither, with a wail of agony and despair. The old dread dropped down upon her ; the old bondage held her fast. In the hands of the grinning hag, who champed her toothless gums, swinelike, and leered at her with rheumy, twinkling eyes, she was as powerless as if the beautiful hut-days had never been.

She had often talked of meeting her enemy, and told her friends how bravely she would behave ; but now, in her sudden distress, she was dumb. The choked voice in which she tried to call for help was drowned and lost in the crush and grind of the rolling wheels, and the mingled din of the people skurrying past.

"Did she make a pile of money for old Gruffy to-day ? What a nice, tidy pocket she has got, like a real lady. Somebody has been a doin' lots for

bare-bones. I'm a goin' to do lots for her now—most too small for my big hand is the money-bag ; oh, she knows her Gruffy has got a great, strong hand, and heavy enough, too. There ! all the dimes are safe now—and the beautiful, bright new silver dollar !”

Poor Blossom-bud moaned and sobbed. That very morning Lily Bell had given it to her with a fond kiss.

“ Keep this for my pretty name,” said she, as she dropped it into her hand, “ in memory of the time you first had your arms around my neck, and because I love you dearly. Show it to Clovis to-night, and talk about me. I shall think of you so hard that I can almost hear you when you speak the words.”

The hag was fiendish in her mirth, and she wheezed and coughed till she had to wipe her eyes on the corner of her ragged shawl.

“ She hates to part with it, but she can't refuse her Gruffy anything, can she ? Never mind ! she shall come out every day and get more, and Gruffy'll hide 'em all, and she'll hide her too. Oh, deary will never, *never* get lost again, cause she will always be close to these eyes, so close that these hands can clutch and hold her fast. Stop ! take off that gay silk kerchief and the smart cloak ; she mustn't out-

shine her Gruffy. I've fetched a skirt to slip over and hide the beautiful dress, and a hood, and a shawl like she used to wear afore she wandered away. I went a purpose for 'em as soon as I knowed 'twas surely my deary. There ! now she looks more like bare-bones ; but I must have her my own frouzy frizzle-head ! How she winces when I stick up the long curls, such a tender deary. Stop ! her face is too clean to seem natural, I must smirch it a bit."

She reached down and grimmed her head in the black dust of the sidewalk, and smeared and soiled the unfortunate child's cheeks till Clovis himself could not have recognized her.

"Big Bën is right round the corner; he will swear you are my lovely daughter," cried old Gruffy, so tickled with the metamorphosis she had effected that she could not leave off chuckling and wheezing.

The captive struggled no longer ; in all the hurrying, jostling crowd which surged past, not one human being showed an interest in her fate. There was no eye to pity, no hand to save. But as she was dragged on at the side of the grinning wretch who dug her long nails into her arm, she stepped so unwillingly, so hopelessly helpless and heart-broken, that if she could have mustered one grain of courage she might perhaps have been saved; for as they

turned a corner they came upon a pale, slender, young man, who was walking rapidly with bent head, absorbed in thought. He held in his hand a bunch of roses and half-opened buds which he occasionally lifted, inhaling their odor.

He started hastily and frowned, as they pushed against him; but as he caught a glimpse of the girl's despairing eyes, and observed how she went not of her own will, but because she was dragged and forced, he stopped short to look at her and her disreputable companion.

"What is the matter with that young woman?" asked he.

"She has had a fit, poor deary," whined Gruffy, extending her hand to beg. "She is always a havin' 'em. I'm a takin' her to a doctor, please give me a trifle to help pay him; the medicines do cost so much; I have to starve myself to keep my sufferin' girl alive. Only a shillin' for the love of yer handsome coxin' eyes, that should make all the girls in love with ye. Only one little shillin', young gentleman."

"Oh!" interjected the artist, drawing back in disgust, "get out of my way."

Vexed that he had given the hag a chance to leer at him, he wheeled briskly about with an indepen-

dent fling, and paid no further heed, though old Gruffy continued to mumble and cry.

A thrill of hope leaped along Blossom-bud's arm straight from her heart, with the first sight of the face she well knew, and she opened her lips to scream for aid.

"Would you! oh, would you!" whispered the horrid creature, sticking her cruel face close to her captive's, whose tender flesh she was bruising with her nails. "If you dare to peep I'll pull the meat off your bones. Shut your clam-shell, if you don't want to be murdered right here. You remember big Ben."

The chance was lost. Blossom-bud sent one hopeless, despairing glance after the young man, who disappeared in the throng. He carried with him the pleading anguish of the look, and it haunted and troubled him.

"Trained to lie and cheat and feign," muttered he. "I was nearly taken in, too. The old beggar's vile wheedling stopped that, though. Poor, unfortunate child! when she has lived out the dismal life which her birth thrust her into without her consent, committed all the sins forced on her by circumstances, and which neither strength nor knowledge were given her to avoid, endured all the sufferings and

indignities her defiled womanhood can bear, and death sets her free—what then? Will the Fountain we read of cleanse away her guilt; or will she be condemned and punished for doing the wrong; when she has never had the ghost of a chance for knowing the right? Will there be a germ of purity left in the abased and ruined soul, worth transplanting among the flowers of the everlasting gardens, where heavenly breezes blow, and angels are the wardens? Orthodoxy plumply answers, no! but the Testament of our Lord tells us, “Christ died for all.”

When John Rexford sat down to his easel, he was still pondering the subject; and after an hour's close application, when he stopped, to study his work, he threw down his brush, and stared at what he had done. The uplifted face of the dancing-girl he had been painting was so decidedly out of keeping with the jubilant grace of her airy pose, that it startled him.

“The very fathomless woe I saw to-night,” said he. “Something tells me her misery was real. I ought, perhaps, to have inquired, but to what good? I have no time to follow up such cases, and no money to relieve them, if I did; a digging, delving man, who has to starve himself that he may paint

when he should be asleep, has little call to be charitable. Still, if I *had* questioned that child, and found "———

It was a queer impulse which led the artist to leave the picture he had meant to complete that evening, and reach down his rose-buds, arrange them to his liking, and begin copying them. He paused from time to time to think of the young girl that sold them, smiling sweetly as she put them into his hand.

"*She* looks as pure as the angels," thought he. "Yet she may fall into depravity ; there will be no lack of temptation where men are wicked, and women are fair. If I had such a sister, or such a wife ! If *she* belonged to me, what a bright home I might have in this cheerless old den. Heaven keep her safe and good, for Christ's sake. Amen."

CHAPTER XXX.

A RACE FOR LIFE.



HE long, weary road was traversed at last, and Blossom-bud and old Gruffy reached the tumble-down ruin she remembered so well : the leaning walls, crazy chimneys, mossy roof ; the dark, dank room, half under ground ; even the tossed, mouldy straw in a corner, where she had shivered so many nights with cold and fear. The box where the dead baby had been thrown as worthless rubbish, after each day's use for begging, had not been removed, and the girl half expected to see its livid face and staring eyes. She might have been dreaming a beautiful dream of her life among her kind friends, and awakened to misery ; so far back and so fabulous had her pleasant times retired into impossibility.

She crouched in the corner where the hag had thrown her with a blow and a curse. When she entered the door, too listless-wretched to move, and she hopelessly watched the gropings and mumbling of the disgusting creature into whose

power she had fallen, as suddenly as the angels fell out of Heaven.

With a candle stuck in a bottle she saw her poking among the old bones and bits of iron and rags in a heap.

"Now she wonders what her Gruffy is hunting," she heard her say, "but she'll soon know, dear Bare-bones ! she will baa-baa, the tender lamb, when I put a brave big 'M' on her shoulder. I could snip off a bit of her tongue with my sharp shears if it did not sing so sweetly and earn money ; but I can't abear to lose Deary again, it makes my poor old eyes cry too much. Where is my brand that I picked up only yesterday ? I meant to sell it to Potts ; but I have it yet, and I will heat it very hot—two M's, one on each shoulder, because it were a pity to make them odd ; no, they shall be treated both the same, pretty dimpled shoulders ! They are nice and white and clean and plump ; it will burn deep, deep, it will scorch and smoke ! I saw them brand my boy ; I heard him cry and howl ; I smelt his burnt flesh ; I felt bad then, now I will feel good ; one to-night and one to-morrow. Deary shall have it to think about, while she sells the gay flowers and her Gruffy sits close beside her."

She stopped her search to squat before her cap-

tive and gloat over her, wheezing and laughing between the drinks she kept pouring down her throat from a gin bottle she fetched from hiding in the cupboard.

Blossom-bud watched her in such dread and terror, that her very heart failed her. She knew by experience what she was likely to suffer ; as soon as the liquor mounted high enough to influence the cruel instincts, always ready to carouse.

"The beautiful frock and the silk kerchief ! We mustn't wear our best things at home, we will sell them and put the money with the bright, silver dollar. Ha ! ha ! did she sing a lively song for the gentlefolks ! Now she will sing another, and nobody to hear but old Gruffy. I shall not grudge my coals, because I will have gay pleasure when my brand is red-hot. On the stair, yes, I remember, I put it on the stair."

She clumsily scrambled to her feet and began fumbling around with uncertain motions, which Blossom-bud was scarce able to follow in the dense gloom of the sweltering den, lighted only by a feeble glimmer.

"I think I see it," muttered she, peering down into the blackness of the shallow hole where she

kept her fuel and sometimes her stealings. "Come out, brave M, we will have great sport to-night."

Suddenly, in the midst of the heart-freezing fear which had nearly suffocated the poor doomed child, came, like a flash of heavenly comfort, a memory of the prayer Mother Bunch was accustomed to offer nightly, and she seemed to feel the pressure of the dear old wrinkled fingers on her defenseless head.

"She is asking God to take care of me *now*, and Clovis says, amen," thought she; "I will return to them, I will not stop here to be tortured. I am strong, I will be brave."

Old Gruffy was groping and muttering among the rubbish with the candle close to the ground. Blossom-bud sprang to her feet, and gave her a quick push which tumbled her, head over heels, down the stairs, and while she lay there clawing and cursing, she flew to the door. It was locked, and the key was in the wretch's pocket, but the bolt was old and rusty and the wood decayed. It took a terrible pull and all her strength, but it yielded to her frantic efforts, she tore it open and flew out.

She stood in a court common to all the tenements, and a narrow lane between two high blocks led into the alley whose gate was always securely

fastened at night, none of the lodgers desiring to be too freely or easily approached. The fugitive knew every foot of the place : the high fence topped with broken bottles, and the fierce bull-dog belonging to the junk shop, who roamed the yard, as well as the cats who squalled and prowled out of his reach.

She had no fear of animals, and though Ripper greeted her with a savage growl, one word was enough to make him friendly.

Right at her side, as she left the den, was a hog-head sunk into the earth, which used to supply the tenants with rain-water, and was now left to fill and waste as it would, sometimes half choked with rubbish, and often the drowning-place for a friendless kitten, and yet again cleared by the boys, who turned off the pipes and used it as a warren for their rabbits or a pen for their pigs. The lid was hinged in middle, and it lay invitingly open at Blossom-bud's feet ; she saw a bright star reflected at the bottom, so she knew there was water in it. By the time she had tried the gate, and the doors of the other dens, she heard her enemy afoot and knew that she was stumbling and groping at the one she had pulled after her as she fled, and her drunken howls made her tremble. She dropped into the cistern, not knowing whether she would meet her death ; a sob

escaped her as she went down ; the water reached to her waist, and it splashed coldly over her ; almost under her feet she found a box, and carefully pushing and working it along, she climbed in it and stooped, half bent, out of sight, under the covered half of the friendly cistern, clinging to the warped staves for support.

The rusty hinges grated and turned, and out came old Gruffy, feeling about the court, groping through the alley and staggering back ; then she heard the slight scratch of a match, and knew her drunken enemy was trying to examine her retreat, but there was only a troubled ripple of the water, which did not betray her ; and a kind wind puffed out the candle.

"She can't get out of here. They all try it, but I am sure to catch them," muttered old Gruffy, tipsily. "I have to fetch back my precious lambs, I can wait. I'll drink, and then I'll sleep. In the morning I'll pay her for all—the bruise I got on the stairs and the trouble. She is an ungrateful wretch, she shall be skinned alive."

Slowly getting back into her den, she lay down with her bottle and drank and drank till the tongue could manage no more curses and she lost power to help herself or injure others.

Blossom-bud scarcely breathed, so intent was she upon the sounds in the den, and when loud, choking snores reached her ears, she began to take courage, and also to hasten her escape, knowing full well what a dastardly fiend she had to dread when old Gruffy awoke.

Carefully shoving the box beneath the opening in her prison, she managed, after a good many splashing failures, to scramble out ; and though benumbed with cold, she ran as fast as she could to the high gate, which she had often tried to climb in the dreary days when she existed only by the hag's permission.

"I am no longer weak," said she, as she at last made good her escape, and dropped into the narrow street beyond, among kegs of offal, ashes, barrels, and debris.

Creeping carefully in the deepest shadow, speeding along without any definite object, except to put as much distance as possible between her and the horrible wretch she was leaving, she almost felt her way out. The dog accompanied her down the lane, sniffing at her wet garments. He was friendly, but he considered it his duty to hinder her exit, as irregular and improper, and she left a bit of her ragged skirt in his mouth, when she leaped down. His

barking made her fly faster, and she was so far away as to hear it only faintly, before she dared to pause under a corner lamp, and try to guess her locality.

While she was gazing up and down, with both hands on her heart, gasping for breath, she heard drunken laughter and shuffling footsteps behind her. Her first frightful thought was : 'It is old Gruffy and Big Ben ; they have hunted me down.' Turning her head quickly, she saw half-a-dozen drunken sailors, rolling up the street, but Gruffy was not among them.

They had caught a sight of a lonely female, whose rags fluttered in the night-wind, and were making for her as fast as they could stagger on their uncertain legs. As she started on, they shouted to her to stop, and when she began to run, they sent after her obscene oaths, so that the poor child seemed to have escaped one peril only to encounter another more dreadful.

The brute impulse to chase and pursue what flees, kept them on, as hunters take, after a poor, sobbing, harmless hare, and call it sport. Around corners they went ; up by-ways ; out again to streets, till the foremost got so close, that he stretched out his hands, thinking to grasp a faltering, palpitating

creature, ready to fall into his arms. But no; he was mistaken; he clutched but empty air. She was out of sight.

Stumbling into a dark, narrow, stairway, she crept slowly upwards, panting and moaning, till she reached a door at the top, beneath which filtered a friendly gleam of light.

Like baffled dogs off the scent, the crazy animals below ran hither and thither, loading the air with curses, fouling it with poisonous breath, till a couple of policemen came at last, with clubs, and drove them away with more curses and cruel blows, and locked them up, and silence fell on the place, and peaceable citizens got leave to sleep in quiet.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SAD-FACED DANCING GIRL.



R. REXFORD was still at work, but he was as inconstant and fickle as a woman in his labors. Sometimes he painted on his water-color buds, and then pushing them aside, he gave a touch or two to the head on

his easel. A vague association connected the two in his mind ; linking, also, the begging girl who had fits, with the sweet young beauty who sang to him of a morning :

“ Come look at my roses, come smell at my posies.”

A clatter, and a racket on the walk beneath his window, mingled with hoarse cries, came unpleasantly up to him.

“ More misery, more crime,” muttered he. “ Has God forgotten the world ? ”

Presently the tumult subsided, and he began to be conscious of a slight rustle and a curious fluttering in the small entry, right close to his landing ; and he arose, in friendly spirit to admit the grey cat who was his often companion. Pulling the door hastily inward, the still body of a young girl quickened it by its weight, and, falling headlong across his threshold, lay motionless before him.

“ My God ! this is the infinite sorrow I have been painting against my will ! ”

His words were scarcely a whisper, he was so shocked and amazed. It was as if his own ideal had sprung into life, to die at his feet.

He lifted the slender form tenderly, it lay limp and passive in his arms, the head with its long

flaxen curls fell back, and the eyelids were closed. Their heavy fringe swept the pallid cheeks. He laid her on his bed and bent his ear to her heart.

"Not dead," said he, "but only a feeble pulse-beat left. I must try what I can do to bring her back to life, though it might be a pity to call her here to more suffering, when her half-freed soul may already see the gates of pearl beyond the dark river."

He bathed her face, and chafed her hands to no purpose, and then he stood erect, trying to think what else he had ever heard of as remedies in such cases. An inspiration came with a wandering glance which happened to fall upon the ammonia bottle he used for cleansing his palette. He poured a little into his palm and held it to her nose; the nostrils quivered, her breast heaved, and with a shuddering sigh, the soul awoke and looked at him through the deep blue eyes; but they saw only an image dwelling within them and unclosing her pale lips, she breathed a few scarce murmured words:

"Oh, Mother Bunch! Oh Clovis! dear Clovis! help me!"

When the artist cleansed the dirt and grime from her cheeks, he began to feel a sense of recognition in the fair face; and as soon as the eyelids

lifted he knew that it was the flower girl, whose buds he was fond of buying, prone and helpless before him; and when he caught her low whisper, begging for help, he knew also that he had seen the folks his young friend spoke of in moments of confidence, he understood the lad's eagerness to be gone at night and a hundred trifles, came to him connecting the two, so that he wondered how he could be so dull as never before to have comprehended the mystery of the cash-boy's life.

"You must wait a bit, poor child, till you are strong, then you shall have comfort from both your good friends," said he, gently.

Blossom-bud perused his features, trying to steady her faculties, and grasp what had happened. The penetrating eyes had a familiar seeming; the pleasant friendly mouth was that of a well-wisher; the voice was not strange, it struck agreeably upon her sense, it chimed in with the rhythm and flowing harmony of the beautiful hut life; as a strain of precious music floats into the soul freighted with the bliss of the past.

After a pensive contemplation of the neighbor so proportionate and agreeable, she felt able to seek for the information she had vainly tried to gather without speech.

"Where am I?" she whispered, "who are you? why do you stand here alone with me?"

"The sad why, I cannot explain. You fled to me from peril : you are in the house of a customer who recklessly throws away suppers on your wares. That red spider came out of your basket, those roses I took from your hand ; though a trifle wilted they are still regal in perfume. I bought them this bright morning when you were fresher and sweeter than the sweetest blossoms ever culled. God only knows what terrors and tortures you have endured since then. I ought to have felt your trouble when I breathed their breath, when I held their violet petals to my lips ; when I sat here sketching their perfection and dreaming foolish idle dreams. They spoke to me all day of you, but said nothing of evil. If they had possessed more power, and I more sagacity, I might have saved you from pollution it may be, and heart-crushing misery.

As John talked on, more to himself than to her, Blossom-bud scarcely caught the half-murmured words ; but she liked the sound of them, and found a ripple of sweet content thrilling through her weary soul, with the good, steady voice.

"You are kind, you will let me go home," said she, quite confidently. "You will not hurt me?"

"I think not. I don't know. Who can tell what influence I may have upon a life thus cast at my feet? There are the buds, I have colored to their richest beauty; there is the womanhood on the easel, into which I have unwittingly poured the dreariest sorrow; here lies the frail thing that inspired both creations; waiting for the aid and succor I mean to give, and with it only joy and benefits; can I go on my way afterward, sundered forever from her, leaving no impress and forgetting that she lives."

"Home," repeated Blossom-bud, fixing a pitiful gaze on the preoccupied artist; "say that I may go home?"

"Of course," replied John, rousing out of his dreams; "of course you shall, just as soon as you have time to tell me the road, and strength enough to walk in it."

"The hut. I must go to the hut. Mother Bunch is looking out of the window; she wants me; the supper is waiting; then we will pray. Oh! oh!"

Putting her fingers to her torn sleeve, she gasped and contracted her brows with a spasm of pain.

Through the rags her fair, round arm showed

all discolored, and purple with the marks of smarting nips and pinches.

Her mind, not yet settled to its moorings, began to wander ; and she sprang up in terror and afright :

"Don't !" cried she ; "don't let her burn my neck ! Oh ! hide me. I *can't* bear to have an M on my shoulder ; a brave, big M. Clovis ! put out the fire ; hold her till I run away. *You* have no pity !" she went on. "*You* left me with her nails in my flesh ; that was cruel ; and you looked so sorry, that I hoped you would force her to set me free."

Though safe in John Rexford's room, and tended by his care, Blossom-bud endured blows and tortures. She begged for mercy so piteously, that the artist was fain to wipe the tears from his eyes while he listened. Worn out, at last, she ceased to struggle, and he laid her softly back upon the pillow, and sat by her in silence while she slept.

"So it goes," thought he, "the innocent-weak suffer, while the raging-wicked, who have the strength, debauch with the devil ; a childish lip so purely curved, could only get that suffering droop through years of misery. I have observed it before, and her wistful eyes are acquainted with grief. I have seen her standing distrait and thoughtful among her flowers ; sad and woeful as a martyr

waiting the kindling of her funeral flames. I wonder will she ever smile again? If a lonely fellow, without family ties, should find a way to bring such a nature out into sweet completeness, wouldn't it pay better than book-keeping? Pooh! John. What are you dreaming of? Remember the bloated, disgusting wretch in whose clutches you saw her on the street; it seems impossible that a blood-tie binds this delicate, shapely, ethereal creature to her; yet Nature crops out sometimes in strange freaks. She will fashion her perfections from just such material as suits herself. Sensuality and vile living sully the choicest perfections. The hag may have been a coaxing beauty in her blooming-time. The last of the Rexfords has the pride of good blood, so many generations have boasted. Look! here comes the soul again; it is studying me; a chaste, pure soul, I do believe. Oh, no! that monstrous, vulgar old reprobate hath no part nor lot in this lovely, sweet child. Now, let me use my gentlest craft, lest I frighten away the troubled spirit, just hovering near, till I persuade it to alight and feel at rest with me. How blessed I should be if I could shield her, and watch her, and *love* her; yes, *love* her! That is the truth, I should like to have her for my own; forgetting her past, I want to

cherish her, and embellish for her an existence re-
poseful and benign."

Mr. Rexford was extremely late that day at the office, and when he appeared, his eyes were glowing, and his face, a shade paler than usual, was vital with emotions.

He had heard Blossom-bud's story ; all she knew of herself, and of Bob, as well as a full account of her meeting with Clovis, and the dear hut days since ; and she sketched such a charming picture with her simple, true words, of her days, busy and innocent, with Mother Bunch, and "Pretty Boy," that John, like Lily Bell, thought how passing dear and pleasant a life in a hut must be, with real trusty friends for companions.

He ministered to her wants as well as he was able ; he shared with her his breakfast, and with her consent, he left her locked in, till he could return, having, in the meantime, made known her state to the anxious watchers, and decided upon the best plan for her future.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GOOD NEWS BETTER THAN GOLD.



E parted from Clovis after his little affair with Bibbs. As soon as he was left to himself his worries returned in force, and he was just making up his mind to go to Mr. Bell and ask to be let off, that he might know what had been done by his friend, the policeman, and get rid of the wearing suspense in action, when the book-keeper entered, stepping quicker than usual, and looking extremely animated and alert. He pulled Clovis by the sleeve, and taking him by the shoulders he smartly shook him while he gazed smilingly into his eyes.

"What's up, King Clovis? Is your crown too heavy, or your royal coffers empty? or has Queen Clotilde been giving you a piece of her mind? In short, what's the matter?"

"Nothing that you can help," replied the lad, drawing off. He felt in no mood for jokes, and his friend's fun, which generally seemed so genuine and pleasant, now struck his nerves disagreeably; it appeared ill-timed and unfeeling. It is hard

sometimes to understand how people can jest and laugh, when our joys are darkened by clouds of trouble.

"Don't feel too sure of that, my boy. I have lots of help in me. Try me, see if I am not able to minister to a mind diseased. What says the great duke? 'It is easier to be wise for others than for ourselves.' Now, I will wager my empty flower vase, that I can tell what's amiss, as well as the Witch of Endor divined for Saul with her familiar spirit. First, you have had a row with Bibbs, who swallowed his fist, and dared you to fight, and you are chewing the cud of your aggravation, thinking how much better you would feel if Mr. Bell would let you pitch into him and give him what he richly deserves; only on the other hand stands the certainty glowering at you, that you are not quite ready to leave off crying 'cash' for Wolfe, Lamb & Co."

"You have heard about the muss this morning, I suppose. I have settled Bibbs for the present. I am not bothering about *him*; far from it."

"You *are* bothered, Clovis; you admit that? Don't you know how it lightens trouble to lay half of it on a good strong friend. I am *your* friend."

"I have a great will to tell you, Mr. Rexford;

it can't do any harm, and I must let it out, or burst."

"To prevent which catastrophe, I advise you to come to my office, where we can talk at our leisure. You shall feel what a trusty fellow I am to confide in."

Clovis told just as little as he could. He had an unconquerable shrinking from discussing his life at the hut. A mixed feeling of love for its sacred privacy, and pride, which despised its poverty; but what he did tell, answered all purposes. Less would have done under the circumstances, and when he had finished, John sat looking down at him from his high stool, while his fingers unconsciously drummed out the melody of the flower girl's ritornello.

"A most interesting narrative," said he, gayly. "I declare it beats Alger all hollow. What will you offer me to turn detective? Suppose I engage to bring you face to face with Blossom-bud before the moon rises, will you make me free of your hut, and give me an interest in Mother Bunch—Heaven bless her!"

Clovis fixed his eyes on the artist; they were full of tears; being a boy, and very tired and anxious, he could not help their gushing; but he did his best to keep them from dropping, and as he

looked, something in John's face struck him like a hope.

"You know where she is, Mr. Rexford. I am sure you could not be so jolly, while I feel so bad, if you did not expect to comfort me. Oh, dear ; is she found ; is she safe at home ?"

"Stop a bit. What I am going to tell you, I found out very queerly. Your Blossom-bud is an old acquaintance of mine. I can't call her an intimate friend ; but I have admired and liked her a long while. I left her at my studio, not an hour ago, safe and comfortable."

"Your studio ?" repeated Clovis, faintly. "Our Blossom-bud ! did she go there of her own accord ?"

"Not precisely ; and yet she *did* enter uninvited, but not unwelcomed ; she was driven thither by stress of ill-luck. Don't look so grieved, Clovis, my home is a safe haven for innocence ; Clovis ; my king, you mortify me ! you do, indeed ! Is it possible that the pupil I have loved and instructed, in manners and morals, can really show me such reproachful eyes ? Listen. I will commence at the beginning, and go into minute particulars. If you have tears to shed, prepare to shed them now ! I shall become quite overwhelming before I finish."

Clovis could hardly wait to hear the whole,

and deeply as John was absorbed in the escape he was graphically word painting, his artist-eye found much interest in the ever-varying features and quick changes of pose, of the eager listener, whose soul hung on his words; and before Blossom-bud was reported impatiently waiting his coming, the lad broke down and sobbed like a girl, and from the depths of his handkerchief he moaned :

“I vow! I wouldn’t treat a dog so.”

Mr. Rexford turned to his books, not liking to break in on such grief, and when at last Clovis wiped his eyes, and jumped to his feet, the book-keeper seemed to be composedly adding a long column of figures.

“I must go right away, I must run to her—I must tell Mother Bunch, she is just used up with fretting. I can’t stop here another second.”

“Oh yes, you can,” replied John, “business must go on if the dying die and the living mourn. You just pitch into your work, things are moving. Your good dame is notified; and what is more, a detective is after the old wretch Gruffy, and unless her friend in the brimstone coat helps her once more, she will speedily wind up the woof of her abominations. I trust she may receive a modicum of her deserts in

this world, and after that—well, we won't trouble our minds as to what she gets afterwards. It is enough to be certain that she will go to her own place, and we may fervently pray that ours will not be in her immediate locality. Therefore, Clovis my king, the best thing for you in this crisis is to step lively. All's that ends well. Are you not sorry now that you never confided in me before? Perhaps in this revelation of my capacity you will see a good place to speak at large, upon the home you left behind you, one cold day last winter."

"No, Mr. Rexford, I never shall say anything about that. Those times are all past and gone. If a person had told me last Christmas-day that my family could have let me go away and allow so many months to pass without a word, I should have been angry. I was a good enough boy, and I suppose they were all fond of me: they acted as if they were, *then*. Never mind! I don't want to talk of them. I want to think of Blossom-bud—she is my folks now."

"As you please Clovis. 'Pride has its caprices as well as our other passions,' and you have right to yours as long as you keep it *clean*; therefore, we will live in to-day. I hear Pat Hafferty's melodious voice loudly calling for a 'cash.' We know who he means.

Spring to the work, remembering what a wonderful pleasure is waiting for our evening.

Our toil and labor being done,
How sweet, oh sweet ! our welcome home.

I say *our*, for I mean to share the good the gods provided for me ; without anybody's permission, I am going to see Blossom-Bud safe in her hut."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A HUT PARTY.



UT on the street at last ! hurrying along to the girl who had so much suffered, and run such dreary risk of suffering more, and who was so dear and so very precious.

Clbvis possessed one of those loving natures which must fasten on objects of affection.

Had the friendless creature he found on the street been coarse and common, he would have become attached to her by force of habit and juxtaposition ; he would have gradually grown accustomed to her defects, very likely approximated to-

wards them, but being fine and delicate, teachable and ambitious for improvement, he was not himself aware of his settled interest in her and her doings, nor his pleasure in her advancement, although among his plans for his future when he was a grand merchant returning in triumph to Roaring River, to receive congratulations, and assert his assured position, Blossom-bud went also, and shared his honors. Even Mother Bunch had a benefactor's place with nice frocks, plenty of green tea, and other comforts for her revered old age.

"*This* is the mother who loved your boy when you forgot and neglected him."

He thought he would say so to his mama, very bitterly sometimes, when the continued silence and estrangement of his family were hard to bear.

"Don't you seem to perceive," asked John, as they hastened over their road, "that it is a proper time to rejoice to-night with table comforts—meat, and drink and preserves? I am no very valiant trencherfly, but I wish to contribute my quota to the festival celebrating our wanderer's return. You must invite me, Clovis, my king, for the sake of polite forms. Let me be one of you just for to-night. I do not see how you can well refuse, though you have so uncivilly dodged my cunning hints afore-

time. You have been hard-hearted, knowing how I am shut out from all woman-kind. Come, open your royal lips and say, 'Mr. Rexford, I was selfish, I am reformed, nothing will make us so happy as your presence among us.' Show a hospitality befitting your regal state."

"That is just were the shoe pinches. You are making fun now ; I don't know how you will take on when you see the poor place where we live. I am not ashamed of it, or of the good old woman who took us off the street ; but I can hardly make it seem right to be there. I feel as if I was living a lie, when I reflect how the true Clovis was at home. But why should I care ? I am doing my best. I deceive nobody ; I ask no favors. Only, if it is amusing, *do* keep it to yourself."

"Excellent sense, great king : especially in the light of the truth that what you are now, you have made yourself from the materials you brought along. You chose——"

"I did *not* choose anything ! I jumped into this just as sudden as a duck dives, and I have been knocked about in spite of myself ever since."

"Exactly so, my boy ; circumstances will buffet you harshly, if you give them the chance ; queer

contingencies will hitch fast about you, refusing to be shaken off. Since you so amiably consent we will have an occasion, this evening. I want to join in the dame's sweet hymns. You perceive that I know whereof I speak. I can pipe a bit myself, and I could, of all things appreciate a real cozy sit-down of the family sort, curtains drawn, tea-pot steaming, table laid for four. I can come if I choose, because Blossom-bud asked me, but I like an invitation from the head of the house. I respect forms; I defer to conventionalities, therefore, oh, most gracious king——"

"Do pray come along, and leave off laughing inside that way, and talking because you feel like it," replied Clovis, with an evident effort. "Suppose it does strike you as queer. I don't care! it is a good hut."

"There is an eminent poet who has spoken in praise of a modest brown stone hut, facing the sun. Remember me, most genial potentate, when you become owner of such a dwelling. If you do, I will paint you a picture of the flower-girl just as she lay on my threshold last night."

Here the artist dropped off among reflections in which his companion had no place, and there were no more words exchanged till they reached the studio.

They found the prisoner impatiently longing for release, and whether in her absence he had been thinking of her as he first found her, or because he had been unconscious of the very marked but gradual change what had taken place in her, Clovis was struck with her appearance.

The wonderful leap she had made from the untaught, unkempt, undisciplined child who hardly knew good from evil, astonished and delighted him ; he found her refined, graceful, and even elegant.

As for John Rexford, he paused in artistic admiration of her poetic prettiness in her rags, so strangely contrasted with her smooth light curls and her clear-hued face.

She had entirely exhausted the resources of John's establishment, had studied the pictures and nursed the cat, she had swept and dusted till the place shone again, she had looked out of the window so much that she had quite polished a little spot for her nose on the grimey pane, and she had sighed a great many impatient sighs for her dear friends, eager to feel Mother Bunch's arms around her, to be sure that she was safe from old Gruffy, her shoulders yet white and dimpled instead of bearing the scorched torture of the brave big M.

At the day's close, however when the key really

turned in the lock, and the door flew open, she shrank from Clovis; gathering her tatters, and flushing with shame, and her first utterance was a truly feminine one :

“Oh! pretty boy! She took away my nice clothes. I can't bear myself in these dirty ones. Don't look at me, I feel so ugly. Oh, Mr Rexford! did you see that! Clovis kissed me, rags and all! how could he?”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CLOVIS BUYS A PAT OF FRESH BUTTER.



WILL will not undertake to tell how Mother Bunch received the good tidings of great joy, “the lost one is found;” nor how she set her house in order to welcome the dear child of her love, nor the prayers she said, nor the hymns she sang, while waiting; nor the tears she shed, when at last she got Blossom-bud into her embrace; nor the fervent thanks she offered; nor the blessings she invoked.

John stood apart, with uncovered head, rever-

ently, in the presence of such pious joy ; and the innocent gladness of the child, and her modest behavior, as the center figure of so much rejoicing, suited him. If he had prompted her actions, and *designed* her looks, he could not have found them more charmingly satisfactory.

She went softly about the place, smiling through wet lashes, and touching gently the old furniture—the sailor-chest, holding Nan's clothes, which were lent to her ; the claw-foot stand, where lay the Bible, whose sacred lessons she had learned to love ; Old Christopher, who greeted her, and Clovis, when they came to the hut. Every dear, homely trifle, she had never thought to see again, how beautiful and valuable to her ! how enchanting ; the only home she had ever known !

Mr. Rexford had a weakness for sweetbreads, and he contributed the best he could find to the festival supper. Clovis felt that the meal would be entirely incomplete without tripe, and he brought a steaming plate as his donation ; and with the dame's doughnuts, and four apples from her basket, the table looked eminently gala : and as for the crockery, it was in the height of fashion—a real harlequin set, with no two pieces alike.

When everything seemed ready, and the green

tea gave forth its good smell on the stove, like Solomon's tender grapes on their vines, they discovered that butter was wanting, and Clovis was bid to hurry out and fetch a quarter pat, wrapped in white paper. Almost before he was gone he returned in triumph.

"There, Mother Bunch ; I've got some that you will relish. The grocer wanted to ask me four cents a pound more for some that had not a mite of taste. I was not to be cheated that way ; and I picked out this myself."

"Paugh," said the dame, putting her nose doubtfully near the package, "it's strong enough to go alone."

"How, strong ? What do you mean ?"

"Why it's old, frousy, stale. Taste ! I should say it had, like old cheese."

"Strength is valuable in horses, age is to be desired in wine, but freshness is a beautiful attribute in woman—and butter, King Clovis !" said John, laughing heartily at the dismay and chagrin of the sharp trader, who had got his money's worth. "As the duke reasons—merit, like fruit, hath its season."

Though they made their supper without the yellow dainty, which is of the color of the golden king-cup, they fully enjoyed the meal ; and Clovis

listened in astonished amusement to John Rexford's flow of talk, so bright and entertaining. He was one of those whose capacities for basking in the heart-shine of human companionship, do not rust, unused, and after his cheerful evening among the hut-folk, he felt his lonely lot doubly dreary. The hymn-singing sounded sweet in his ears, and he took away a picture of Blossom-bud in her lowly home, which was his for life.

Many schemes were discussed, and castles were reared in the air, without any foundation whatever. It was positively settled that the girl's street-work must come to an end. She shrank from a return to it with shivering dread; and they all felt it impossible to permit her to resume the employment which had exposed her to such peril; and she confessed that she had no longer any confidence in her power to defend her rights, if her enemy should again steal upon her when Mother Bunch was out of sight.

As John listened to the talk, and watched Blossom-bud, leaning on the old dame, whose wrinkled fingers clasped her close, while her eyes looked fondly down on the pensive face, serene and content, but with a memory of sorrow around the pretty mouth, he revolved an idea, which had before presented itself to his mind, and was getting fast

lodgment in his thoughts and wishes. Like most ideas which are worth practical working, it required money and time—two luxuries in which the poor artist was lamentably lacking. But he *could* make a sacrifice.

John had a marine just finished, upon which he had spent his choicest skill, and closest study ; every fine line, every cloud-shadow, every white wave-top had cost him thought and labor. He was satisfied with it ; he could not change it for the better. He had received an offer for it—five hundred dollars ; so little it seemed to him for his *best*. He could not afford to keep it ; but he could wait for a more liberal buyer. He intended its price to start him on his trip to Rome, and Autumn ought to find him there, established and busy. Now, what if he were to wait, and earn more money at his desk, and paint more pictures ; setting aside his cherished plan for his *own* life, that he might step forward and help the girl who needed help, and who was so interesting to him ?

With the proceeds of his fine marine, and some other things he had on hand, he could place her immediately at school, giving her a chance to learn her worth, and cultivate her powers—and, what then ? While he slaved and delved, she would grow refined

and charming, and then, to reward his toil and his sacrifice, she would, probably, fall in love with somebody else—Clovis, very likely—and leave him lonelier than ever. John did not attempt to cheat himself with the idea that it was unselfish philanthropy which prompted him; he was willing to serve seven years—but he must be sure of his Rachel as his reimbursement.

It was no small matter to turn his back deliberately on the cherished hope of his heart, toward which he had painfully struggled through many years, just as he saw its certain fruition within reach of his hand, and he fought with his doubts and fears, and also with the longing in his soul for the love and companionship of the pretty creature, to whom he had as good a right as anybody like himself aloof from human ties, without kindred; and no home but the hut, which good Mother Bunch might any day leave to go up to the mansion prepared for the blessed.

When he reached his studio after a last good-bye to them all, he sat down among his household gods, and felt that they were worth very little as lively society. The fire was out, and the night wind was chilly; he was in no humor for work, and with his gaze on the roses and buds withering in their

vase, he set about reasoning with the "shall I, or shall I not?"

The dancing girl looked at him with her sad eyes ; no money could buy that picture, *that* should hang in a little parlor, where gossamer curtains let in the country air through its open window ; and in a dainty chair, beside a work-table, should sit and sing a fair slender creature :

"Come look at my roses, smell of my posies."

"Pshaw, John !" said he, rising, "what a silly old coot ! What a doting idiot ! Be careful that you don't sketch the face on Wolfe & Lambe's immaculate ledgers. No pleading glances are in order there, but straight looking stares able 'to ferret out mistakes and estimate large profits."

CHAPTER XXXV.

BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS.



HE agitation and exposure through which Blossom-bud had passed, told on her in many ways. She was nervous, easily excited, often moved to tears, would waken screaming from her sleep and cling in frantic terror to the dame, who hushed and cradled her in her arms as if she were a tender baby.

Indeed, Mother Bunch gave every moment of time to her pet, which she could possibly spare from earning the daily bread to keep her alive. She watched her with a full heart, wishing and praying to see the roses glow again among her dimples, and to hear once more her low laugh, which was so much sweeter to her old ears than sweetest music. It was so long before Blossom-bud had got a real joyous laugh in place of her fleeting smile; and now she listened in vain for its soft melody. It just took the best flavor out of the lives of the girl's friends.

When John Rexford saw how the good dame

loved her adopted daughter, he felt that any project proposing to take her away, would be cruelty, and that he must for the present put off his plan.

Blossom-bud herself settled her occupation about a week after her return.

The artist became fond of bringing his sketches to the hut that he might enjoy his evenings in the society he was getting so fond of, and they all welcomed his coming with real delight. Mother Bunch took a benevolent interest in him, and admired his work ; she knitted and smiled, and said "amen" to their merry chat ; and "oh law ! how can he make flowers fresh enough to pluck, just with that small little pencil made of cat-hairs and a few paints spread on a board."

John was finishing an order for illuminated mottoes set in pale primroses, and Blossom-bud leaned over his shoulder, watching the ultramarine he was working into a Saxon B, in silent attention.

"I almost feel as if I could do that, Mr. Rexford," said she, timidly.

The idea was an inspiration, and John set her a task directly. Before he left that night, one-third of the "Love one another" was brought out in brilliant carmine and cobalt blue, and so neatly executed that he had little fault to find.

The rapture of the enthusiastic pupil when he praised her powers, made sober John's heart pleasantly to flutter, and Mother Bunch was more than delighted.

"Heaven bless you, young man," said she patting his head and quilting her face all crisscross with smiles. "May Heaven reward you for making such brightness in my child's eyes! I've ached to see her sad, with no power to bring back the pretty glad ways belonging to her, and the colors of the beautiful lines she's made, as gay as the tulips in the Vandervoort gardens! And the good words that shine so, it is the sweetest command of the blessed gospel for young and old."

"We will strive to abide in it, mother," said John. "I know you mean to let me in among the 'one another.' I won't crowd you two; just give me a corner in your heart."

"So I will, sir, and so will Blossom-bud, that you was good to. I think you are a nice decent gentleman commandin' our best respects."

After an hour's close application, John took the brush from his pupil's hand. "You have done more than enough," said he; "you are over tired."

She quietly let him remove the motto, and after a little she went over and climbed into the dame's

lap, who opened her arms and smoothed her check apron to receive her. Clasp ing her hands, still purpled with old Gruffy's nips and pinches, around the neck of the only mother she had ever known, she rested her delicately tinted cheek against the weather-beaten one which loved the caress, and nestled to the warm heart beating for her.

"Don't you love Mother Bunch, Mr Rexford?" asked she. "Isn't our hut a nice hut! Isn't King Clovis a brave King? See, he frowns at his book. Don't we take comfort? Isn't God good to us? I ought to be the best girl that ever lived. If I could only find Bob and have him here, I should want nothing else. Will you pray harder, dear mother?"

"I do keep askin' our Heavenly Father, pet, since I seen how your soft little breast heaved and swelled with love for the lad, I have asked that he might be found. All in God's good time. Pet, you must wait, and watch; he'll come. I am just as sure as I am of your kisses. Oh! Mr. Rexford, you had better believe I bless the day that sent these young ones seekin' a shelter. I didn't know what to make of them, but they would stay. 'Look at me,' said Clovis, taking off his cap, 'look at me, Mother Bunch,' says he. Ha! ha! the sassy dog's-kin; he give me the name. I like it. They're the comfort of my days, and

when I wake nights and find my arms no longer empty I give the girl a chug with thanks for her being there."

Ah, where was John's beautiful scheme? He was glad he had not broached it; and was content to enjoy what he had got, for a while, at any rate.

But he felt that he might preserve a memory of Blossom-bud's sweet beauty as she lay on the dame's breast, and he set at the sketch as soon as he reached his studio.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

BLUE THE COLOR OF TRUTH.



HOUGH the pay was small for the mottoes, John was able to supply orders enough to keep his ardent tyro busy; and before long she was tidy and nice in new clothes of her own earning.

A month slipped by, not broken by violent events, nor marked by great changes; but, in looking back at the days afterward, they always remembered them as among the pleasantest of their young lives.

Nothing could be heard of old Gruffy; the police were thoroughly at fault, and Clovis' friendly officer assured him she must have decamped with her villainies and cruelties to some other city.

Lily Bell was away at a water-cure; she had suffered an affliction which left her motherless. The proud lady had taken her haughtiness and exclusive tastes where they don't count for much; and the baby found in the white lily, after shivering and crying a little while in this dreary world, had spread her angel wings, and flown back to join the other little spirits in the celestial nursery; so Lily was dressed in somber black, and she was all her papa had in his splendid home.

Constant letters passing between the friends kept their souls in communion, and Blossom-bud couldn't be thankful enough to Clovis for teaching her to write. She was reasonably proud of her proficiency and neatness; though she still mourned over her poor spelling, and shed some secret tears, because she was laughed at for a few small blunders, when she wished to inform her correspondent that she "*was wareing the harte she gave, on a not of pail blew ribbin.*"

Still an exile from Roaring River, and seemingly blotted out of its interests, Clovis matured his

plans and hopes for a return thither. All reserve being of necessity lifted from his friendship with John, he found immense pleasure in talking about the old days, which seemed very far away, and the artist became so acquainted with Pauline and Dick, and sister Clotilde, that he felt sure of knowing them whenever kind fortune should bring him into their society ; for as the days sped along, he, too, became included in the good time coming, the triumphal entry of the great merchant to his native place. A party of four, never more to be separated.

When John found that the pious dame mentioned him in all her nightly prayers, he felt blest, indeed, secure of the *corner* he had modestly begged in her heart.

Not a week passed that they did not go pleasuring somewhere. To the beautiful Park, or among islands ; and many of their evenings were given to picture-galleries. John proved indefatigable as cicerone, and though the strict Methodist stood out against any use of holy time for amusement or recreation, she finally consented to their Sunday strolls, when John pointed out to her how her pet needed country air, to establish her roses.

Mr. Rexford kept his dream hidden almost from

himself ; but he led up to it all the while, by his teachings, and might have found an opportunity to make it a reality, had not some events occurred, which in a single night, broke up the simple harmony of their lives, as easily as a dropped pebble quickens into circles the bosom of the lake, extending and broadening them on and on to infinity.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BEAUTIFUL KATRINA VON LOMBARDY.



ILY BELL was at home again. The great mansion felt lonely, bereft of even such motherhood as she had known ; but she said, " Oh, no," to all Miss Squelcher's suggestions of companionship. The Buddingtons, whose young people had a suite of rooms and a *suit* of servants, and dwelt in elegant seclusion from their parents, on the third floor ; or the Remingtons, whose children gave soirees dansant and champagne suppers ; or the Fitz Filberts, whose only daughter never spoke a word of English in her life, nor yet the beautiful Katrina von Lombardy (Mrs.

Bell's pattern of high-toned gentility), seemed at all desirable to poor, simple Lily. When Miss Katrina called, after her return, and desired to have "earnest conversation," Lily only blushed, and retired unto herself ; such a grown-up child of fifteen frightened her ; and the society-talk, and splendid clothes of the aristocratic American, who despised New York, and adored "dear Paris," failed to interest her plain and practical mind.

There was only one girl whose presence she desired ; whose conversation delighted her. *She* lived in a hut, worked every day for the food she ate and the garments she wore, and was poor as the birds of the air who exist by the kind providence of their Heavenly Father. In Blossom-bud, Lily found all she coveted: and her best pleasure in sharing her studies and her few hours of relaxation.

After as much Miss Squelcher as she could bear, Lily had recourse to her father, and, seated on his knee, cuddled into her nest, with her lips close to his ear, she begged to have her dear friend for the whole of a long day.

"Of course, Birdie, as many as you like ; keep her altogether."

"I wish I could feel it right to beg of her to come and be my sister, but Mother Bunch loves her

too dearly, she would be sorry ; and Clovis has a better claim on her than any one—he was her first philanthropist. Listen, dear Papa : what shall I do about Miss Squelcher ? She despises my friends awfully and sniffs so dreadfully every time she sees them. She makes me blush when she calls them ‘skiff-skuff and riffraff.’ I am afraid my dear Blossom-bud will feel hurt when *she* snorts at her and says things. I wish you could send Miss Squelcher on a long errand that would take her till dark night.”

“I will do better, Birdie : you and I and the nice modest girl in the red kerchief will go to Central Park and have our dinner in the rustic cottage among the lindens. How does that strike you, hey ?”

The hug he got and the thankful kisses brought tears to his eyes ; and as he clasped his treasure close, he prayed that God would spare the one light of his life, to comfort his old age.

Lily could hardly swallow her breakfast, she was so impatient to commence her good time, and the governess, who sat in Mrs. Bell’s place and poured the coffee, sweetened that beverage with no smiles, while she listened to her eager ejaculations. Restrained from the scolding she longed to pour out, she looked what she dared not speak, and it required a good deal of facial alertness successfully to bestow

her smiles on the *widower* and her frowns on his daughter.

The horses traveled all too slowly to suit Lily, and they were noble beasts, quite able for their work, too. When at last they *did* draw up in front of the hut and she espied Blossom-bud sitting at the window, bending intently over her work, she screamed with delight.

John Rexford's pupil was a credit to him, she showed a true eye for color, and her mottos were in demand; just now she was laboring for love. The Mispah into which she was lining the rich purple was intended as a gift to Mother Bunch, who first showed her the word in her old Bible; and so interested was she in her occupation that she did not hear Adolphus' loud voice nor see dear Silver-Dollar till she ran up and tapped the pane. Then she sprang out, all roses and smiles.

A very short time sufficed for preparations, as the only toilette to be made was to tie her crimson kerchief over her smooth curls and wrap herself in her little blue shawl, and presently Mr. Bell saw the two lovely young creatures running toward him.

"See, Papa! here she is! like a pink, like a white rose, like my own dear Blossom-bud, that I love better than any girl in the whole world."

Mr. Bell was pleased with his darling's pleasure ; and he was immensely tickled with his pompous coachman's lofty scorn, and observing how he lifted his stately shoulders so that his drab collar met his banded hat, and his turned-up nose lay level with the sky, he took malicious amusement in ordering him to descend from his perch to gather clover-leaves for the guest, and present them with his own hand, and he laughed aloud, seeing him swell up so that he nearly burst the buttons off his livery.

"Look out, Adolphus, you will split up the back like frog casting its skin in April," said he. "Now you may show our charming B. B. how your horses can step out ; the young ladies feel in a hurry."

On her stand before the church, they found the dame, who eyed them in amiable surprise, but she smiled and nodded pleasantly, when she heard of the frolic in hand, and hid away the hut-key safely in her pocket.

"Heaven reward you, Miss Lily, for the good thought," said she, "my precious child deserves your kindness, and I can feel safe while she is happy."

Mr. Bell watching and enjoying their animated gestures and laughing faces, saw the two maidens bend beneath Mother Bunch's wrinkled fingers,

according to their invariable custom, and get her blessing, and as they turned hand in hand and kissed each other afterwards, he experienced an emotion new and delightful, which kindled and pervaded his being. Stocks, bonds, gains, all dropped out of value, and love, peace, and purity, assumed their true importance. The fashion of this disappointing, unsatisfactory world was nothing to these innocent hearts; its pomps and vanities, its strifes and struggles, its spites, jealousies and torments, had no power over their gracious souls.

Out on the Park, riding in a gondola, feeding the swans, wondering at the long-necked giraffes, pitying the chained eagles; straying through the labyrinth, listening to the band in the vine-covered arbor, dining in the secluded cottage, running, walking, dancing, laughing, still not weary, they started for a stroll through the flower paths leading nowhere in particular. Such chatty children! such an indulgent, complacent papa!

But while they frolicked, a black cloud had crept up from the west, quite blotting out the sun, sailing swiftly on great shadowy wings, above the still tops of the tallest trees, and across its somber billows, zigzag, flew darting flashes of vivid lightning, and from the high vaults of heaven came the voice

of the storm, rolling in reverberating peals of solemn grandeur.

"Hillo, pretty ones ! We are threatened with a deluge !" exclaimed Mr. Bell. " Here it comes, drops as big as peas ! Now then !"

Seizing a hand of each, he hurried as fast as possible to the nearest shelter, which happened to be a gate-house on the edge of the lake, and they reached it, breathless and panting,—especially the merchant, who was not precisely in training for a race,—just as the floods descended. The wind had got down among the branches, which it swirled and shook, tearing and scattering the blossoms from the gay bushes.

The girls stood at the open space looking upon the black water, which leaped up to meet the shower, beating its breast in resentful splashes, silenced and awed by the majesty of the tempest until they were driven back by the veering wind which drove the rain into their faces, and compelled the keeper to shut and bar the door, and they sat down on one of the long benches commanding the opposite entrance.

Lily fell into thought while she listened to the ceaseless patter of the swift-falling shower, upon the shrubs and plants. The sense of security from all harm, amid the din and clash of the elements, was

intensified by the presence of her papa and the pressure of Blossom-bud's hand which she held fast in hers. She was thinking how much Clovis would have enjoyed such an outing, and how they would bring him along next time, when suddenly she felt a chill, a tremor, to flutter along her friend's fingers; and quickly lifting her head from its rest on Mr. Bell's broad shoulder, she found her pale as death, her startled eyes fastened on a greasy, flabby woman, half concealed behind a pile of fire buckets, which were stacked in a corner.

"What is the matter, dear?" asked Lily. "Oh, Papa, Papa, there is old Gruffy! Quick! have her arrested, make them punish her for beating Blossom-bud, so that she will never dare to hurt her any more," cried she, hurriedly, as the truth flashed on her.

"Woman, do you see this girl?" cried Mr. Bell, seizing Blossom-bud's hand and pulling her face to face with her dreaded enemy.

"Yes, your honor, I sees her, and a sweet pretty young creature she is," replied the hag, puckering her lips to a smile, and speaking low and small.

"Well! mind what I say! She is under *my* care and protection, and if you ever dare so much as to

breathe on her again, you shall suffer the full penalty of the law."

"I am a poor honest lonely woman, your honor. I sell shoe-laces. I do not suspicion your meaning. Why should I touch your girl? You speak wild, or you take me for another. There's plenty of folks knows Mrs. McHenry, the peddler. I don't lack customers."

"Do you pretend that you did not carry off this child, kidnap her in broad daylight, beat and abuse her?"

"Lord love ye, good gentleman! I never saw the young lady in my life. You should be careful how you insult the poor. I'll just have a smart speer at her now, that I may know her again." She took a step forward, and as she did so Blossom-bud reeled and fell senseless on the floor.

Lily screamed, and the keeper, hearing the commotion, ran hurriedly toward them, while Mr. Bell lifted the fainting child, and laid her on the bench. It was a minute or more before she was so much recovered that they had leisure to remember the peddler. She was gone. Mr. Bell ran to the door, and searched up and down, but saw no trace of her, nor any footsteps in the wet sand. Only the swift march of the storm; battalions of long, slanting

rain-drops, flooding the sluices, bearing away crushed flowers and broken leaf-stems upon the turbid current.

"She was shaking her fist at me, and made me feel that she was near, before I looked," said Blossom-bud. "Oh, I am afraid she will get me again. I am only fifteen, and there are so many years ahead, in which I must dread the brave, big M, on my shoulder."

A violent fit of shuddering and weeping convulsed the poor child, and though she tried hard to be consoled and assured by her friends, it was a long while before she could control her nerves, so that her teeth would not chatter, nor her lips quiver, and she palpitated with fear when she stepped upon the path by which her enemy had disappeared, and she clung fast to Lily, who made believe to be very determined and brave.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BURIED UNDER THE RUINS.



HE storm was past. The world smiled fresh and beautiful, as if just completed by its Creator, who beheld, and lo! it was very good.

After the unpleasant interruption of their pleasure and their consequent fright and excitement, the girls were quite unhinged; and Blossom-bud's continued paleness and tremors made Mr. Bell anxious to get home, and he placed them immediately in the carriage.

The sweet, fresh air did her good; the fresh color came back to her cheeks, and she tried hard to smile.

"Oh! how good those pineapples smell," said Lily; "and, look! there are delicious oranges! Buy us some, please, papa."

"Stop at this fruit store," called out Mr. Bell to his coachman, and as he drew up to the curb, the merchant got out, and entered the shop to make selections, which took him several minutes. During his

absence, the girls were interested in watching from the street side of the carriage, a great iron cap which was being carefully elevated to the top of an unfinished building opposite. It looked so ponderous, rose so slowly, and took the strength of so many men to force it upwards.

A couple of music boys paused among the crowd, and one of them began to sing, "Father, dear father, come home with me now." He carried a small fiddle under his arm, was blue-eyed and dirty; he was clad in cast-offs, not one of which fitted him; but he laughed, and kicked up his heels, while trolling out his lugubrious ditty, to which his companion twanged an accompaniment on his harp.

Lily watched him a moment before pointing him out to her friend. He *seemed* to be the same Bob she once sought out on the street; the same she saw at the theater, the Florence night.

"Blossom-bud," said she, laying a quiet touch on her friend's wrist, "look! I believe that is some one you love!"

Before she had finished speaking, Blossom-bud had leaped from the carriage, and Lily followed her, both swiftly running to the strollers.

They had not gone half-way across the street,

when the cap escaped from its ropes and chains, and fell crashing through the scaffold, which it scattered into a thousand fragments, precipitating the workmen, and burying the two vagabonds in its ruins.

Adolphus, the grand coachman, was no more to the frightened horses than a fly ; they paid no heed at all to his vociferous commands, but dashed away at breakneck speed !

A crowd quickly gathered, and the unfortunates were rescued, all more or less maimed. The young harper was taken out stone dead, his head hideously crushed and his limbs broken.

The merry fiddler was the last of the victims. He was lifted from under a weight of boards and sticks, bruised, bleeding, senseless.

His faithful friend, who stood watching and waiting, mutely questioning each face which came to view, staggered against the beams one dizzy moment, before she got strength to approach and raise the head of the wounded lad from the ground where they laid him, and rest it on her knees.

She went so quietly and with such a grief on her, she was so slender, so young and so pale, that those near involuntarily stood aside in the presence of her love and her sorrow.

"Bob !" she whispered, putting her lips close to

his ear, "don't you know me? Come to, Bob, do try to live, and be good! Dear Bob, you are not dead, are you?"

The lad opened his eyes, and looked at her, and languidly closed them again. He recognized no friendly glance, saw no remembered features, in the clear fine face bending over him; but he felt the love-clasp which closed on his hand, for he tightened his fingers upon the small ones he had held a thousand times in the old days of childish wanderings, and childish misery.

Mr. Bell was just emerging from the shop, bearing the luscious fruits he had taken such pleasure in carefully selecting, when the terrific crash came, and he saw his frantic team tear off, through the dust and smudge, dashing among carts and wagons, hitting here, bumping there, a wild race to death, and all that made his life valuable, at the mercy of a couple of irresponsible beasts, rushing to their own destruction.

His heart stood still, and the excellent oranges dropped from his limp, hopeless hands.

Suddenly he heard a voice, sweeter at that moment to him, than a chorus of angels.

"Papa! Papa! here we are," and how blessed

were his eyes which saw his darling daughter safe and unhurt.

"We got out of the carriage just in time, dear Papa. We wanted to make sure of her Bob, and all that stuff fell on him before we got near, and he is under there now. Oh! make haste! it is Blossom's Bob: oh! there! they are pulling him out; he does not move, his eyes are shut; my dear has got her boy, and he is dead; her heart is breaking!"

Mr. Bell understood quite well who Bob was; he had heard his story over and over, and had felt such sympathizing interest, that he had tried to find him; and he made haste to care for the unconscious lad, over whom Blossom-bud was quietly weeping.

I don't know if the great body of the New York population are surgeons, but I notice that an accident rarely occurs, but three or four of the medical profession spring up directly, and the present occasion was no exception to the rule.

A nice dapper man, in a cut-away coat, leg-of-mutton whiskers, and stove-pipe hat, and a gold locket dangling from his watch-chain, and wafting an odor of healing drugs about him, rushed to the spot and examined the injured, pronouncing upon their cases with voluble dispatch.

Mr. Bell pressed him into Bob's service at once,

and anxiously watched his methodically cool examination, and waited for his diagnosis.

"No bones broken," was the conclusion. "But a skin full of bad bruises, which will take time and good nursing to heal."

"I will have him conveyed to the hospital at once," said Mr. Bell.

"No! oh no! he is my Bob," exclaimed the girl. "I can tend him. I want him in our hut. Mother Bunch will help me. I can't lose him again."

"But at the hospital he will be so much better off."

"Don't say that, don't think it! Bob can be no where so well off as with me. I love him."

"Let her have her will, Papa," pleaded Lily. She has been through such hard times, don't *you* go to hurt her. This doctor can come along; tell him he must."

"I don't need urging, young lady," replied the surgeon, smiling; "fees are not all we doctors work for. I shall be glad to make your friend comfortable, and it is true, if he has a decent clean home, and kind women in it, he will do as well there as anywhere."

Mr. Bell called a carriage, and they lifted in the half-insensible lad, Blossom-bud and the doctor fol-

lowing, and the merchant and Lily showed them the way to the hut.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

NOT SO BAD AS MIGHT BE.



T was getting late, and the apple woman was already at home, and busy dipping up water for her tea from the sunken hogshead where Clovis and the street-child first saw her.

"Mother Bunch!" called out Blossom-bud, as she caught sight of the stooping figure, "oh! Mother Bunch! I have found my Bob."

The dame lost no time in hastening to their assistance, and she asked no questions, she received the motherless wanderer into her brave arms, and undid the door of her heart at once to her darling's dear. Blossom-bud's Bob was her Bob from that hour.

As soon as the surgeon had completed his plastering and *poulticing*, and the sufferer was laid comfortably into bed, Mr. Bell carried off his daughter

fearing the effects of so much excitement and fatigue, and promising to return on the morrow.

"I want you to take care of this case doctor," said the merchant; "consider it mine."

"No, sir, it is mine," answered the surgeon. "There are certain complications here, I wish to watch to please myself. You need feel no responsibility. I am not a *poor* doctor, as far as money goes; and such skill as I have I will use."

Mr. Bell shook his offered hand with much warmth, and they parted mutually pleased.

Clovis went that evening with Mr. Rexford to see a great picture; and did not reach home till after nine o'clock.

"I am sorry I am so late, Mother Bunch," exclaimed he, dashing in, "but I've had a jolly good evening. I say, what are you doing with so much vinegar? smells like making pickles. Hillo! who have you got in your bed?"

He cast an inquiring look at the pale face on the pillow, the handsome curly head, and in an instant the merry blue eyes began to smile.

"What is that scamp here for?" asked Clovis, in an angry tone.

"He is my Bob," answered Blossom-bud, turn-

ing from one to the other, "he got hurt to-day, and Mr. Bell let me have him to nurse."

"Your Bob? You don't say *he* is the friend you are always making such a time about? Why, that is the mean, sneaking thief that stole my money!"

"Oh, dear," exclaimed the girl, sorrowfully. "My Bob! your enemy! my poor Bob the wicked fellow, who did you so much harm? Is it true, Bob? Did you take the purse? Did *you* try to rob Clovis of his overcoat, and I hated that thief, and loved you all the while? Say he is mistaken, Bob; *do* say you are innocent."

"Bill boned it, and I helped him," said the fiddler, smiling gayly as a memory of that night came back to him; "it was funny."

"Oh, how could you! how could you," sobbed the girl, covering her eyes, and sinking down by the bed.

"The proper thing is to call in the police, and have him shut up," said Clovis; "we don't need any such scalawag under this roof."

"But he is almost killed," said Blossom-bud.

"Small loss if he was quite," retorted Clovis, roughly. *I* don't want him around me."

Mother Bunch interfered: "The Lord's hand is on the lad; he has had a taste of death. Your

anger is too loud, young gentleman. Wait ; let us see what his Heavenly Father will do with him.'

Clovis flung off, and sat in a corner. No lessons ; no reading ; no pleasant chat. The dame let him alone. She was not pleased with his conduct. Poor Blossom-bud, while she remained near Bob, wetting his bandages, wept silently. She was hurt to the heart's core—that her kind boy, who used to be so good to her, should be the wretch whom she had so despised for his meanness to Clovis, seemed hard to bear. The delightful meeting she had dreamed over and prayed for, was a failure. Clovis hated the culprit. Lily would scorn him, when she learned who he was, and good Mother Bunch could only pity and endure him. She longed to try to set the crooked things straight, and get Bob a better place among them.

"Clovis," whispered she, going over and kneeling by his chair. "Clovis, can't you forgive him his trespasses, if he is sorry?"

"He don't act very sorry, grinning there."

"Bob!" cried she, in a plaintive voice, "aren't you sorry you took that money?"

The stroller was very grave. He had silently listened to what each one had said, and watched Blossom-bud's tears.

"In course I be," replied he, earnestly. "Bill would do it; he said he'd take another mate, and leave me to go alone, if I didn't help him. I was fond of Bill; we didn't s'pose 'twould trouble such a swell, with lots of grand folks, to miss that little—and us, poor chaps, had to pay our fare. I thought I'd a died a laughin' to see him turnin' his pockets wrong side out, a feelin' for his cash, and we a standin' behind him all the while."

Bob laughed again at the recollection, till a sudden pain caught him, and stopped his fun.

"Oh, my eye! what a cramp I've got in my bones!" groaned he. "I say, young gent—I won't never do it no more. Bill said—— Oh, where is Bill? I know he is dead. My mate is dead. I saw him fall close by me. Bill was my only friend. Bill is dead."

He began to weep bitterly, and Blossom-bud wished to comfort him. "Clovis will be your friend, if you try to be honest and good, and so will Mother Bunch. I always loved you, Bob."

"That *swell*, my friend!" said he. "If I'd a knowed you was a chum of Frizzletop's——"

She put her hand quickly over his mouth. "Don't say that awful word ever again, as long as you live; it is not my name any more!"

"All right, I won't. I want to tell the young gentleman. If I get well, I'll pay you back that money, every cent of it. I wish I hadn't done it. I didn't think much harm. I'll take my fiddle, just as soon as I get off this bed, and I'll fetch you what I pick up."

"That is a good spirit," said Mother Bunch. "If the lad keeps his word, Clovis, he can do no more, except to repent. It is wicked to steal, you boy—very wicked."

"So they told us, but they never put no victuals into our stomachs, and when we come across something good, we took it in course; we didn't like being hungry no more than rich folks. Bill, he was a wonner for bonin', he won't never bone no more; nor will I, if I get a chance to live without. I wasn't *born* a thief; but there was old Gruffy, she laid on to me when I didn't fetch her things, and then afterwards there was Bill; and how could I help it? I ain't so much different from the young gent. I can laugh and feel good when I've had enough to eat. Don't you s'pose I should be glad to go clean and smart! Land of the livin'! I never axed my mother to put me in the poor-house. I didn't hanker to be snaked onto the street; and that is just all about it."

Clovis was much better able to understand this view of the case than before he had encountered his own trials, but he still eyed the lad askance.

"Do you pretend to make me believe you would put in and work if you got a situation?" asked he. "Would you get up early and spring to it and go to bed tired for the sake of being honest?"

"Would I! Show me a chance, I'll soon let you know whether I would."

"Well, Bob," said Clovis, going up to the bed, "give us your fist. Blossom-bud is fond of you; we have often talked of having you among us; never mind by-gones; maybe I would have done the same or worse, if I had been left out in the cold. I am going to be your true friend. I'll speak to Mr. Bell. He is all the time hiring cash-boys."

"Are you in earnest, young gentleman?" inquired Bob. "Do you *really* feel like trusting a chap that boned your money?"

"Oh, Clovis, pretty boy, I knew you couldn't be hard and cruel," said Blossom-bud, seizing his hand and fervently kissing it. "All my beautiful dreams are coming true. I shall work very fast, and help poor Bob pay his debt. God has heard your prayers, Mother Bunch."

"Yes, yes," answered the dame, nodding a great

many times. "The lost is found, and we must bolster him up all ways. Clovis, when you go to your mother and tell her how you got the better of your anger and pride, this night, she will rejoice, for he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city. Come, young ones, let us sing a hymn :

" 'There is a fountain filled with blood.' "

Clovis swung out boldly on the tenor, and the dame squeaked and quavered devotionally in the treble, but Blossom-bud's heart was so full of joy which is akin to grief, that her tears quite drowned her voice. She could not help thinking of her first night in the dear hut when she was a poor neglected little heathen, like Bob, and she joined earnestly in the supplications Mother Bunch put up for him, and added pious thanks of her own for all her blessings and mercies.

CHAPTER XL.

BOB STARTS ON A NEW ROAD.



RUE to his promise, Mr. Bell brought Lily to look after the lad, and a hamper of jellies and fruits accompanied them.

Adolphus, the lofty, had escaped scatheless from all his peril, and the horses were scarcely injured. He regarded the lowly dwelling with even more scorn than on his first visit, and made up his mind to give warning, when he was asked to lift out the hamper and carry it in.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bell, "what are *you* putting on airs about! as if you did not come out of a worse place than this, with a mud floor, and no roof, to speak of."

"I have always lived with gentlemen before, sir."

"Do as you are told, and be pleasant about it, or you won't live with me," answered Mr. Bell.

Adolphus took in the basket; he set it down with a jounce, and stalked out grumbling—but as nobody

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cared particularly, he enjoyed his dignity in private ; and there was no harm done.

The merchant had a long talk with the stroller, who had learned a great deal since his hurt, and was glad and anxious to confide in the kind, friendly gentleman, whom he well remembered seeing in the car.

A new world was opening before the lad, of which he had never conceived. A world of right-living, sweet words, and helpful sympathy. He stood on the threshold of the life, and greatly desired to enter among the good and honest, and though he often smiled during the conversation, he wept also tears of gratitude and repentance.

Mr. Bell promised him a place in the store as soon as he could take it, and bade him get well as fast as possible.

Lily sat beside her father, while the confidence was going on, silently listening to the wise words, which did good like a medicine ; and thinking how strange it was that children should have such dreadful times, and then a new idea flashed into her mind, which made her start up and clasp her hands gleefully.

" Oh, papa !" exclaimed she, " now I can be really

and truly a philanthropist. Bob will let me give him some some clothes—won't you, Bob?"

"I will be thankful for all you are pleased to do, young lady. I'll try to deserve your kindness."

"At last!" said Lily, sinking back, with a happy sigh, "now I am content."

In less than a fortnight Bob was on his legs again. Young wounds never gangrene; young blood flows cleanly, and, thanks to his excellent constitution and the surgeon's care, he was able to accompany Clovis to the store within a month after his smash-up.

He was introduced to Mr. Rexford and John Haferty at the hut, both of whom showed a warm interest in his welfare, and he took hold of his duties with a zeal which reminded them of the first days when Clovis ran up and down to the cry of "cash." He was well warned also to beware of Bibbs, who embraced the opportunity to swallow his first and goggle his eyes as soon as he made his appearance.

As the surest way to get fond of a person is to help him, you may understand how Clovis got to like his protege—and he had good cause, for a brighter, merrier, more faithful lad, never played

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Mercury for the benefit of New York ladies, and he was much noticed and praised for his promptness and dispatch, as well as his handsome face.

He seemed to take on respectability with his good clothes, and turned his back at once and forever on all his old tricks and habits.

The pleasant noonings which Clovis had always enjoyed with his two friends, were more pleasant still with Bob for a third. He had observed many queer things in his vagrant life, which he made doubly droll in the telling. They all took pains to trim his speech to their liking, and only once or twice were the same corrections needed. He was so anxious and eager to be worthy their acquaintance and friendship.

At the hut Bob was a real treasure, each one had something to do for him.

Mother Bunch knitted his stockings, Blossom-bud painted him a motto, Clovis taught him to read, and they all instructed him in hymn-singing. He was not long a debtor either, for he made haste to refund the theft from his first wages. The creditor took the money, with thanks, and handed it immediately to the dame, to be laid aside in the sailor chest.

CHAPTER XLI.

SQUELCHER TAKES LEAVE.



ILY BELL was down with small-pox.

There was no longer any hope of measles or canker-rash, or rosiola—plain small-pox was all over her in ugly certainty.

At the very first hint of the frightful disease, the fastidious and select Squelcher took umbrage. She expressed herself outraged and affronted that so vulgar a sickness should dare approach her prim person, and gathering up her skirts and shaking the dust from her feet she fled like chaff before the wind.

For a whole week after, she diffused an atmosphere as sweet as Proserpine's after her visit to the infernal regions ; while she instituted a strict quarantine of burning brimstone.

When Lily heard of her evasion, she laughed gleefully in spite of her pain.

"How nice ! how very nice ! No more Miss Squelcher ! Now, *I* will pour your coffee, papa, and look at you myself. Nobody will ever say rirraff and skiffscuff to me again, and I must have Mother Bunch right away to nurse me. *She* is not

too pretty, and I am sure dear Blossom-bud will spare her to her Silver Dollar. Please send Dolphus directly."

Mr. Bell needed no urging, and while he called the select governess some hard names, he was rather glad to be rid of her, especially as she was beginning to adorn her spare person in gew-gaws and tinkling ornaments, and to *mince* as she walked, so that he felt uneasy in her company. Her hair suddenly became as black and frizzy as an Ethiop's crop, and her eyebrows sprouted, like magic, from nothing into two thrifty arches, and her cheeks were dyed red as the garments from Bozrah.

She commenced to be almost *too* vivacious and sprightly in her table-talk, and she presided sweetly, and took her food gingerly. And who can blame her for trying her fascinations on the rich widower?

Before noon the apple-woman's wrinkled face was bending over the sick girl, smiling her best quilted smile, cheerful and full of comfort. She took full possession of the case, and attended it with care and zeal enough to raise a large family. She held Lily on her knees, she nursed her in her arms, she cradled her on her bosom, she blessed her morning and evening, she sang soothing hymns and lullabys

in a pleasant old cracked voice, tuning through her nose.

None of the doctor's sudorifics had half so lulling effects as the dame's minstrelsy. And all through the tedious time when it was needful for the patient to be swathed in oils and hidden from daylight she told her droning tales of sights she had seen while sitting behind her fruit-stand, and things she had heard, crooning on in a sing-song monotonous monotone, so that half the time the girl lost the thread of the narrative in peaceful slumbers, deep and refreshing, after slipping and catching it like a clue in her dreams.

She offered fervent prayers in her behalf. The prayers of the righteous avail much, saith Holy Writ. We are not able to know how events which were decreed before the morning stars sang together, and, being known and decreed, must come to pass, can be modified or hindered by any cause whatsoever. But Christ is our only hope. Unless He can and will hear us, unless He can and will cleanse our sins, and make us fit for a better world, we are lost. Happy are those who fully believe in His love and His atonement.

CHAPTER XLII.

A PSALM OF LIFE.



LOSSOM-BUD had risen to a position of immense dignity and responsibility. She was housekeeper in the hut ! and a remarkable housekeeper she proved ; the dame's training came out in full force. There were no lagging breakfasts, no untidy ways to annoy the young gentlemen, and the nice order in which they were accustomed to live was religiously maintained.

There are females who can never bestir themselves in housework, but all the dust and soil of the occupation seems to fly at them and stick fast. If they make bread, they are plastered in flour ; if they undertake confections, they are sticky with sugar. You can always know what they did last, because the rubbish of the labor shows on them. Blossom-bud was not one of these maladroits.

I have heard it asserted that a lady could not cook a breakfast in a white muslin and be able to appear in the same dress, looking fresh and unsoiled. I am told that the cooks who come un-

flushed and presentable from the kitchen to the table, are only at home in foolish story-books full of impossible unrealities, &c. Ah, those carping doubters should have seen Blossom-bud without spot or blemish, and as sweet-tempered as any petted darling.

As for Clovis and Bob, you would have been pleased to see them sit at their nice table. Clovis, always a gentleman, had no difficulty in keeping up his home ways, and his friend and admirer eagerly followed his lead. Clovis at the head, said grace, and the others joined in a reverent "amen." Though they had plenty of jokes and laughter, they never forgot to be decent while they were merry. They did not miss their hymn-singing, or their nightly prayers either.

"Clovis," said Blossom-bud, the first evening, "couldn't you get a book of worship, like Mr. Rexford's, and read to us out of it? I feel too dreary, to miss all Mother Bunch's good ways."

"No, I'll pray just as my dad does; he never had his written down for him by somebody; no more will I. How could a book say things about Lily, or us? I don't want to speak a piece when I go on my knees."

It was a quaint and touching sight, those three isolated suppliants, grouped around the claw-foot stand, where lay the Bible, holding each other's

by the dame's side, with her day's gains in her bosom.


"Now, it is quite plain, dear mother," said she, "that I can bravely help. Ah, I am so glad! Pretty Boy will laugh when I show him my money."

"But you must feel that it was your Heavenly Father who sent you customers, and thank Him when we kneel and pray to-night."

The girl made no reply, but she pondered the words, longing to understand and obey.

CHAPTER XX.

A FAMILIAR VOICE.

NE day, Clovis happened to be passing Mr. Bell's private office, and heard a voice which set him trembling, and made his heart jump.

It was but a single remark of two or three words, and then the door, which had been half open, was suddenly shut.

With a single bound he was at home, careless and gay, his mother was busy with his interests and comforts; she rustled about the house in her hand-

some silks; his twin sister flitted and sang; and kissed him when they met; his father joked and loudly laughed. His recent strange and bitter experiences were but a dream from which he was awakened, and he leaned against the wall, forgetting his errand, and oblivious of the bustle and hurry around him.

"Oh! here you are!" exclaimed Mr. Rexford.

"I was looking for you."

"Who is in that room?"

The book-keeper seemed not to observe the lad's agitation, or the eagerly questioning, anxious face he lifted to him.

"Mr. Bell has a friend, I believe," he replied, carelessly. "I want you to run right up and hand in these tickets to the boot and shoe department."

"But, Mr. Rexford——"

"Don't stay to prate now. I am in a great hurry. Business first, conversation afterward."

The lad lingered no longer; his friend was so peremptory—he felt obliged to obey in haste.

When he returned, he peered eagerly into the room, which was now open, and empty.

"Has he gone?" asked he, gasping for breath.

"Who gone?" said Mr. Rexford, with his finger on the column of figures he was adding.

by the dame's side, with her day's gains in her bosom.

"Now, it is quite plain, dear mother," said she, "that I can bravely help. Ah, I am so glad! Pretty Boy will laugh when I show him my money."

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hands, while Clovis asked for the blessings they wanted, and the others said "amen." It was pathetic, and if his language was simple, his heart was sincere, and we must believe He who said "suffer little children to come unto me," heard in Heaven, His dwelling-place.

Every evening Clovis brought news of the sick girl. Though the run up to the Bell mansion made him a whole hour late, he did not mind it in the least, and the first topic discussed in the hut when they were all united, was the health and prospects of their dear Silver Dollar ; and all the good words good Mother Bunch sent to them from the upper window, which was the nearest approach her prudence would permit, were received, treasured, and acted upon with loving duty.

Mr. Rexford directed their studies, and Pat Hafferty talked a great deal about his sweetheart and the "Branch," in which he promised Bob a place as soon as it was established. They certainly missed the absent dame and longed for her return ; but their time was profitably spent, and full of interest to every one of them.

At last the day eagerly hoped for, arrived. A glorious sunny, breezy morning, bearing life and vigor on its wings.

Lily was pronounced well: she was up, dressed in white, and all ready for the pleasure she had hardly earned by gentle patience, and true resignation during her time of pain and privation.

The house was purged, fumigated, aired, and out of quarantine. The windows were wide open; stands of fresh flowers adorned the staircase, and a profusion of roses, heliotropes, hyacinths and pansies, made the rooms gay with color, delightful with sweet perfume.

Lily stood where the lace curtain blew back and fluttered in the delicious warm wind she had not been permitted to feel for so long, leaning thoughtfully against the casement; watching for the coming of her dearest friend, who was to make her a long visit: and when at last Adolphus the lofty appeared in sight, and the pretty creature in the red kerchief sprang from the carriage and flew to the embrace of her Silver Dollar, all smiles and dimples, it was as pretty a sight as one often sees in this selfish, grinding work-a-day world.

A certainty of bountiful good times unalloyed by Squelcher; days and days without any separations; with so much to hear; so much to tell; Clovis and Bob, to be discussed; their pranks and frolics, their sober sayings; all, everything to enjoy. Such rap-

tures! such hugs and kisses! while Mother Bunch stood benevolently by—in a clean apron, with a muslin kerchief pinned across her faithful breast, and the sheerest of cap frills bordering and shading her comfortable old countenance.

“I felt almost afraid to have you come,” said Lily, after a while, “and see how ugly my face is; all red and marked—*you* don’t mind much, do you, dear; *you* love me just as well as when I was white and smooth.”

“Indeed, indeed, I love you!” said Blossom-bud, kissing her again and again. “How I wished I could bear your pain. Oh! I am so glad to see you again.”

“It is nice to have you look right at me and not seem shocked. I can’t bear to see myself very well yet, but I must get used to the strange thing in the mirror as fast as I can; I was nearly sure of your love, but what will Clovis say? Don’t pity me with your eyes: it *is* a trouble, but I will still be a good philanthropist.”

After this little talk Lily dropped the subject and never picked it up again: serene and content in the occupations and pleasures each morning brought, and which Blossom-bud so thoroughly enjoyed.

Every day they drove in the Park, or out through the open country: they went sailing on the Bay;

they made frequent excursions to the hut, and carried good things for the boys and Mr. Rexford who were abiding there during the absence of its women-folk.

Lily was happy : she was full of plans and projects, in which Mother Bunch was an efficient co-worker. The good dame knew just where money would do good, and with her the two young girls visited many poor homes, made poor by vice, but in which were pitiable lame and ailing children, starvation and nakedness. She made them read about Dorcas and showed them how to make garments for a poor friendless cripple they found ill-used and starved, and she helped their search after picture-books to amuse and instruct the skiff-scufl and riff-raff, and little pinched faces grew bright at their coming, and gratitude followed their taking leave.

But though Lily was always occupied and cheerful ; though she complained of no pains, she did not rally into full health and strength ; she was easily fatigued, and would often press her hand to her heart, which ached with rapid throbbing ; her face was colorless and waxy, and her eyes unnaturally large, lustrous, and frequently swimming in tears which dimmed her sight, and she had bad dreams in spite of Blossom-bud's presence, and sometimes lay

awake through the long dark hours thinking strange thoughts while the others peacefully slept.

Mr. Bell watched her anxiously, and with painful forebodings, and Mother Bunch shook her head in secret, saying, "Oh! me! will the pink roses ever bloom on her pretty cheeks again?"



CHAPTER XLIII.

CURIOUS FUEL IN THE WOOD-BIN.



T was about ten o'clock; everybody in the Bell mansion was asleep, except its master. He was busy in his private room looking over papers.

He had decided to sail as soon as possible for Europe with his daughter, and had privately made arrangements for taking along the two whose society and care were so necessary to her.

He had set no limit to his stay abroad, and he was examining particularly all items of business which demanded his personal settlement.

There were many circumstances of his past life

thus brought to his notice, and a host of sad thoughts crowded around him. His jocund youth was gone, his handsome wife, whom he loved faithfully, was dead. His only child ! ah ! she was the center and sum of his trouble and solicitude.

He leaned back in his chair, lost in a tangled web of dreary forebodings, out of which he feared to find the clue. A dull rumbling noise beneath him, which his ears had some time heard without being able to convey information of the fact to his pre-occupied brain, at last aroused his attention, and as it was suddenly heightened by a din and clatter, he felt sufficiently disturbed to light a taper and descend to the basement.

All was dark and quiet in the kitchen and cellar, except a swift scurry of a legion of roaches and rats, who fled before his approach.

There was a small entry beneath the grand staircase, leading out into the area. He pulled open the door from the kitchen, and peeped in as a final precaution. It was cluttered with brooms and baskets, so huddled about the wood-bin as to leave scarcely room for the outside door to swing, and the first thought of the house-master was a lecture needed and deserved upon untidiness.

His candle flickered over the figure of a well-

grown girl, who had her hand upon the bolt, and as he caught sight of her, she turned a half-frightened, half-stupid glance toward his face.

In the last instant, before Mr. Bell appeared in the entry, old Gruffy pushed up the lid of the wood-bin in the corner, sticking out her head and shaking her fist :

"Somebody is coming Clumsy, along of your awkward racket, knocking down baskets, there ! Hush ! mind your eye now—look as dumb as a fish, film over your eyes and whine ; say you got locked in, and are afraid of you pa."

"I'll bang down that there kiver and stamp on ye, if ye say much ! Who're ye given yer orders to ? Duck now ! put your ugly mug out of sight. Enough to scare the owls. I can't see ye ; but I know just how beastly ye look."

Down dropped the lid, and the hag disappeared grumbling ; not at all like the young bride who played hide-and-seek on her wedding night, and was never found till all her beauty was turned to decay.

"What are you about here ?" asked Mr. Bell of the girl, who whimpered, and fumbled the latch.

"I'm tryin' to get out, if you please ; I want to go along. Oh dear ! how my pa *will* wallop me."

"But how came you to be shut in ?" inquired Mr.

Bell, whose irritation melted into pity, seeing her silliness and her grief.

"I goes a begging cold pieces, if you please ; and they tasted so good, I sot down to eat a bit, and the door blowed to ; and afore anybody came to open it I fell asleep, my legs were so tired. Oh ! how my pa will wallop me."

As the gentleman was able to get nothing more from the stupid half-witted creature, who ever repeated the cry of the poor starling, and looked so dazed and helpless, he conceived an idea of offering a blanket and pillow till morning ; it seemed hard-hearted to turn her adrift ; but he finally undid the bolt and let her slip through the door.

"There now!" said he, kindly, "don't get caught again. Wait till you reach home before you commence your supper."

"Oh ! I will, thank you, sir, they was so good and my legs was so tired. Oh, how my pa will wallop me !"

"I guess not, your little nap is not such a crime as all that. Here, take these, and put them in your pocket, to buy you a breakfast."

He was about to close the door ; in fact, it was so nearly shut as to seem so from the outside, when a sound of steps caused him to open it again, and he

saw a man stealing rapidly up to the prisoner whom he had just released.

"Is the crib quiet, Spicey Bet?" whispered he. "Is old Gruffy on the lay, queen of my 'art?"

"Oh dear, don't wallop me, pa!" screamed the girl who was watching the door. "The gentleman was very good, he said you wasn't to wallop me!"

The fellow immediately began slapping and hustling Spicey Bet, and she wept so bitterly that Mr. Bell was indignant, and felt it his duty to remonstrate, which he did, in a loud voice, and very strong language.

"She's allers a doin' it; she's up to droppin' off to sleep in queer places, and me out nights a huntin' of her; she's the plague of my life, she is; and her blessed ma, not getting a wink of comfort for worryin' and frettin'. Come along home now, and step lively."

Mr. Bell spoke a few words on the grace and excellence of human kindness, and gave some seasonable advice, which he enforced with a handful of loose change, upon thankful receipt of which the pair shuffled away.

Mr. Bell stood looking after them, thinking how many varieties of suffering there are in this miserable world, and listening to their irregular foot-

steps, after he could no longer trace their forms in the darkness.

Now that it was over, and his sympathies began to cool, the idea struck him, that there was a shade of queerness about the whole affair, and the night watchman coming in sight at that instant he hailed him and related the circumstance.

"Was he a gruff-spoken chap, with a slouch in his shoulders, and she, a slow thing, with rooms to let in the upper story; and did she say her pa would wallop her?"

"Yes, she did," replied Mr. Bell, "your description is pat to identification."

"The jumpin' John Rogers! why couldn't you have held on to em! They are the very ones we are after a month or more; they belong to a gang of cracks, the worst in town: there wasn't a nasty, greasy old flabby she devil along, was there?"

"No, I think not. I saw only the man and his daughter."

"Daughter?" repeated the officer, laughing. "Spicey Bet is a queer daughter? Her daddy has got horns and a tail; he's the father of lies, and she's an apt scholar. If you had only held on to 'em, I'd a gin a ten to a nabbed them this night, I just ache

to get my clippers on to them ones. Which way did they go?"

"To the east, by the sound. Well, it is a pity, but it can't be helped. I am well rid of them, anyhow."

"Don't be rarin' tarin' sure of that, neither, sir. Nobody is safe while them there cut-throat ruffians is out of quod. They are an awful bad lot."

The discomfited night-guard tramped disconsolately off, and the merchant double-locked and bolted the door and ascended to his apartment.

Hardly had his footsteps died into silence, when old Gruffy popped her head out of the wood-bin and chuckled and wheezed with laughter.

"Safe from 'em! Oh yes, you're safe as a hen in a fox's mouth. What a pretty little surprise you'll have to-morrow mornin'. Blessye, deary, bless ye! hurry and patter yer prayers and drop to sleep."

Having gathered together his papers, and deposited them in the safe, Mr. Bell went softly into Lily's room to take a fond look at his only treasure, before retiring.

The place was full of shadows, that seemed to waver and glide backward from his approach, hovering over the white bed, where peacefully sleeping

lay the two pretty creatures, a lily and a rose on one pillow.

Mr. Bell could never permit the door to be quite shut between him and his child. He liked to hear her gentle breathing and to know that she could call him to her side with a word.

The whole bounteous affection of his great generous heart was centered on a slender, delicate little thing, so frail and ethereal, that he could not help seeing how she might float up out of his sight, among the angels and leave his arms empty.

Lily was nearest him ; one thin hand held Blossom-bud's in a love-clasp, and her hair swept over her shoulders in light flowing waves.

He did not think of the blurred beauty of his darling, though it showed in sad contrast with the splendor of her friend's slumber-gathered roses. He thought only of her lovely preciousness, her winning graces, her satisfying goodness.

He smiled in amusement too at a little sight he saw. The story of the last waking hour of the simple children, who could be so womanly.

In a crib which had cradled Lily's babyhood, and had also rocked the first sleep of the sister found in the white lily, lay Mistress Winker in a dainty night-gown, with fluted ruffles of finest cam-

bric, her mattress of quilted satin, her sheets as sheer as gossamer. Motherly solicitude was evident in her appointments, and a great box of toys were ready for her morning diversion ; but alas ! Macbeth or some other marplot had murdered all the sleep in her internal arrangements, the springs which closed her eyes were broken, and she was doomed to lie for ever staring blankly upwards. . She was not left to lonely vigil, however, for beside her was another dolly, whose blue orbs had been plucked out like Sampson's, leaving empty sockets, and whose flaxen wig had been combed and curled away to half a dozen scattering hairs. Her cheeks, moreover, were melted in a hot bath, once prescribed by Dr. Lily, when she was attacked with same nameless disease ; calling for smoking applications, and brick-dust and blueing mixed, in hourly doses. He remembered how chagrined the little mamma was at the effects of her heroic practice, and how he had enjoyed her comments on the accident.

As he dropped a last fond kiss upon her lips, he planned a royal season among the toy-shops with the two, who still nursed dolls, although they were real useful Philanthropists.

CHAPTER XLIV.

GRUFFY IS PRESENTED WITH BRACELETS.



OURS passed. The church clocks tolled one, before Old Gruffy emerged from the wood-bin. A new sort of "fat pine" for kindlers : she stuck up her head and listened, then she carefully laid back the lid, and put out her ill-shod foot—then its uglier fellow ; next she turned her lantern upon the door and tiptoed over, and noiselessly undid the bolts ; first oiling them from a bottle she carried in her pocket.

"Pa" entered, followed by the witless one so afraid of being walloped. She had quite recovered her courage, however, and gave her orders with authority and decision.

"Now ! sharp's the word," said she, "and full late enough too. Charley'll be round in another hour—"

"If you're goin' to watch, shut your jaw and begin," snarled Gruffy, as she and the man stole softly away.

As soon as they disappeared, Spicey Bet coolly took a drink from a canteen she wore slung around

her neck, and placed herself comfortably in the gap, like one well used to the dangers and accidents of house-breaking.

The others went to work with industry and dispatch. The parlors and dining-room were soon rifled of all valuables capable of noiseless transportation; the booty was packed in bags, and left with two men at the area gate, who shouldered the burdens and scurried away, keeping in the shadow, dodging down alleys till they were clear off in safety.

The pair of burglars then ascended to the bedrooms, seeking for jewels and ornaments—immensely tickled with their success.

Blossom-bud was dreaming of the day in the Park, reproducing its pleasures, with fantastic shiftings of the scenes, and preposterous minglings of trouble and vexation, attacking her unexpectedly, small difficulties of toilette, when, from being richly clad, she was suddenly adorned like Eve in Paradise, where stockings were mis-matched, and raiment went and came in tiresome mystery, where she sat down to sumptuous repasts, which lacked taste, and failed to appease her hunger. Then arose a vision of the Gate-house, and the loud roar and angry dash of the storm smote her ears, and from a dark corner

which she felt that she must watch, because the dead baby was hidden there, appeared Old Gruffy, hideous and abominable.

If she could but call once ! Springing up with a desperate effort, she sent out a wild scream, which took all the power of her being—and then awoke.

A cold sweat stood on her forehead, and the sluggish blood which had clogged her veins leaped back to her heart with a great sickening throb. The agony was no longer a dream ; her enemy was there in flesh-and-bones ugliness, a savage, threatening reality.

She clasped Lily around the neck, and hid her face on her shoulder, and the two lay pale and trembling, only for an instant, though—for Blossombud's eerie terror-call aroused Mr. Bell, who opened his eyes to find a man in his room, and busy at his desk, on which lay a pile of money already collected, to which was about to be added his repeater and spectacles.

The sudden cry arrested the burglar's hand, and he turned his head to listen, while the merchant lay motionless, scarcely awake to the reality of the situation, or conscious of the cause which so rudely shocked him out of his first sleep.

Presently a soft moan caught his attention in

Lily's room, and a woman shuffled through his apartment, beckoning and pulling her accomplice to hurry away.

✓ "Pick up the swag," whispered she, "and get off."

Mr. Bell sprang out at once. He let the robbers go, and ran to his daughter.

The pale glimmer of the night-taper just sufficed to show him the two pretty heads, close together, and hurriedly striking the gas, he was appalled and alarmed at the sight before him.

The marks of the hag's claws were purple and livid on their necks.

Old Gruffy knew well the danger of a moment's delay, but malice and spite so inflamed her cruel nature that she stayed long enough to clutch their fair throats, and she would gladly have throttled them, then and there.

"I've gin ye a necklace to remember old Gruffy by," she muttered, using all her strength in a last wicked pinch, as she threw them back gasping and helpless. "Next time, set up a squall, you bag-o'-bones! when ye catch a sight of yer best friend, and raise the house onto her, will ye?" she added, shaking her fist and squattling out of one door just as Mr. Bell entered by the other.

So intent was the horrified father upon the condition of the half-strangled girls, that he did not for a while hear or notice the noise and scuffling in the dim hall ; but when cries of "murder," "help," "police," "oh Mr. Bell ! Mr. Bell !" rose loud and louder, he felt obliged to rush out.

Mother Bunch was battling with the hag, whom she managed to hold fast, in spite of her scratchings and clawings, but the good soul was fast losing her breath, not being in training for such encounters, and she handed her captive over to the merchant, being herself quite exhausted and panting, though still game.

"Praise the Lord ! hold on, sir ! Oh, do make sure of her ! she is a dreadful creature ! deserves everything ! She is Old Gruffy that abused Blossombud so. Oh my ! Oh dear ! Thank God for the strength he lent me for that little minute. She can't get away from *you* !"

More scuffling down stairs, and up rushed a night-watchman with a lantern and a pair of handcuffs.

"I heard the row up here, but I could not come sooner, cause why, I had a batch down yonder to pick out. I reckoned they was on a job after what you told last night, and I just got some of my mates

ready. Let me relieve you of that lady. Gruffy it is! Jerusalem! This is a haul—Big Ben and the girl and her. Here, beauty, have on your bracelets.”

The officer secured her, and pushed her before him down the stairs, where the others of the force had bound and tied the rough pa and his witless daughter; and soon they were all carried away and the house left to silence.

Blossom-bud was up hanging over her friend, kissing and calling to her when they returned; but it was a long time before Lily revived and rallied enough to hear her voice or return her caresses. The doctor came immediately, and all restoratives were used, all tender care lavished upon the poor child, but the shock to the nervous system was so great, that the father's heart was very heavy, and the old dame spent many hours on her knees, begging that the lovely Lily might yet a little longer bloom in its earthly garden.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE POLICEMAN'S HOTEL.



FROM the first appearance of Bob in the store of Wolfe, Lambe and Co., the door-keeper Bibbs had taken especial delight in sitting upon him ; swallowing his fists ; calling him names, and playing such mean tricks as were calculated to inflame his anger, and stir him up generally.

Bob was a royal-natured fellow, put together after an admirable pattern, so that when he was washed, and dressed in Lily's philanthropic suit, and stood beside Clovis, he looked every whit as well-born as he.

He earnestly tried to keep in mind what had been impressed upon him as the certain penalty of fighting, but he found it hard work to leave his tormentor alone, especially as he knew himself more than a match for him, but he was fired with an ambition to be somebody. He was so happy in the new life open before him, and loved so dearly his first real true friends, that he did his very best every day in all the duties required of him.

The hideous grimaces which made Clovis' flesh creep, only tickled his sense of the ludicrous ; and as for tripping him up, Bibbs might as well have tried to upset a thistle-down, for all the stroller's muscles were in full use, and he was as springy and agile as a young deer, and he might have gone safely on, laughing at and disdaining his enemy, had it not been for a new boy named Sphix, who came about his own time among the cashes.

Sphix was a poor thin-legged, big-bellied little fellow, pale and ill-nurtured, and afraid to call his soul his own.

As soon as he appeared, Bibbs began to tease and abuse him, and scarcely a day passed that Sphix was not beaten and bullied in the nooning time ; so that his haggard cheeks were often stained with tears.

After Bob found it out, he took his part, and threatened to complain to Mr. Lambé, so that though Bibbs did not dare so openly to persecute the little boy, he still amused himself with slaps and kicks whenever he could come at him slyly.

The night of the robbery at the Bell mansion, Clovis and Bob left the store together, according to custom, after parting with Mr. Rexford, who was

engaged to pay a visit to the Dusseldorf, in company with Pat Hafferty and his sweetheart.

They were in high good humor, being full of a plan for Sunday, which was to include the hut folks, and Mr. Bell, if he could be coaxed to join them, and were discussing the details of the festivity when they turned a corner and came upon a sight which drove everything else out of their thoughts.

There was Bibbs, holding little Sphinx by the ears, dragging him backward, and kicking him, while the sinewless child roared with pain and begged to be let alone.

Bob was earnestly describing a certain hill he knew of, where they would go, which was clothed with sweet-smelling pines, and blue with wild lupins; when he caught sight of the bully and his characteristic occupation, and his mirthful mouth lost its smile. His upper lip went up to his nose, and his white teeth came together with a clash, as he sprang on Bibbs, hauling him off, and giving him the punishment he vilely deserved.

But unfortunately, when they were in the thick of the fray, who should come tearing down the walk but a tremendous billy-goat, head down, horns ready for action. Running gallantly at Bob he butted him from behind, just under the knee joints,

so that they doubled up like a knife, and let the boy down to the ground, with Bibbs atop.

In falling, Bob struck the curb with his head, and cut a hole in it, and the sudden dump and thump of Bibbs upon his chest knocked the breath out of his body.

Then the nasty treacherous nature of the bully came out; seeing his antagonist disabled, he began to pound his head and face with his fists, and drag out his hair.

Clovis had stood aside, not wishing to interfere in his friend's affairs while he was able himself to attend to them ; but when he got upset, and was wounded, and Bibbs began cruelly to use the opportunity, chance, in the shape of a billy-goat, gave him, he forgot his promise to Mr. Bell, his hope of promotion, everything except Bob and the dastardly treatment he was getting, and fell on Bibbs in a resentful rage, warming with his work, and putting into his blows the accumulated wrath he had restrained so long, and Bibbs, being like all bullies, a coward when brought to the test, howled and roared wide-mouthed and ridiculous.

Many stopped to look on, and a policeman appeared among others. He asked no questions, would listen to no explanations, but he and his mate just

huddled them off to the station-house, little Sphinx included, pushing them in among rough, drunken bad-smelling wretches, the refuse of the streets.

Clovis boiled with indignation ; he took Bob's head in his lap and bound up his wound with his handkerchief, and he tried to comfort the shivering Sphinx, who dropped into a corner and dug his fists into his eyes ; but as the night wore on, and more besotted creatures were from time to time added to the crowd, and he gazed at Bibbs who had become a bundle of snores, he muttered with much feeling, "I vow I wouldn't treat a dog so."

When the police came to exchange, they looked in on the night's arrests, each picking out his own.

"Hillo!" exclaimed a friendly voice. "Hillo! Clovis! I thought you said you would not have a room in my hotel, and yet here you are on the first floor. What does this mean?"

Clovis was very glad to recognize his quondam acquaintance, and explained, with much force, the situation, and pointed out the little victim, pale and scared in his sleep ; as well he might be in such company, and so far from mother-love.

The officer heard the whole, examined Bob's hurt, and then went over and pulled Bibbs by the arm, shaking him well, as he set him upon his feet.

"Come, swaggerer! What have you got to say?"

"I didn't do nothin'. I was only a playin'."

"Playin', was you? Well, I guess you will play a new game pretty soon. I reckon you're a goin' to get a dose of what's good for you."

"Oh, sir, if you please, don't send me up; my mother she is lame; she wants me to home."

"Hold your noise. I am not the judge."

"That is a fact about his mother," said Clovis, who began to relent at the thought of the helpless cripple; "his wages are all there is to keep the poor old creature. I suppose she sets by him, nasty as he is."

"This world will be ready to fall to bits, I reckon, when mothers can't find something to love in their children," answered the officer. "Don't you fret, young gentleman. I'll see to his case."

As the officer took care to let the judge know about the boys, and the manner and cause of their arrest, the call into that dignitary's presence was a mere form, ending in the dismissal of the three with a reprimand.

Clovis came near being committed for contempt of court.

"See that you behave in future," said his honor.

The lad had been brooding all night on the injustice and oppression of the whole proceeding, and he replied with a loud voice :

"Of course I shall behave. I always do ! If I ever catch that Bibbs nagging little Sphinx again I shall interfere ; somebody's got to look out for folks that are afraid to help themselves ; the law and you around here, don't seem to be of much account."

"If that is your idea of peaceable citizenship, I had better shut you up awhile, till you get a little more humble."

"Go ahead ! you can't do much worse than you have done, sticking poor Bob into that dirty den, where you drop your worst rogues, when he was all bruised, and needing good care, and, here ! just look at this little Sphinx, that never hurt a fly, getting pitched into, when he was going home after a hard day's work, and his mother fretting and looking out of the door all night, thinking he was lost. How would you like it, if he was your son ? I vow I wouldn't treat a dog so "

Nods, winks and head-shakes were exchanged among the listeners, and they all compared the fervent speaker with the down-faced lad—one so brave and handsome, the other, carrying the brute in his face too plainly to be mistaken.

"There is a spice of sense in what you say, young American ; but you will learn after a while better to choose your time and manner of speaking," replied the judge, who was a good-humored man, and the father of a brace of fine boys, of whom he was reasonably fond. "Who are you ?"

"I am my father's son, sir."

Everybody laughed, especially Bob, who was amazingly amused, and the policeman, who also thought it his duty to shake his head and frown.

"And what is your father's name ?"

"My father's name is Dad ; that is what I mostly call him."

The judge hid his face in his handkerchief a moment ; then he blew his nose.

"Take him away, officer," said he. "the young child call Sphinx is also discharged."

"Good-by, Mr. Judge ; you ought to make that policeman go down on his knees and beg our pardons, for catching hold of us as he did. I don't expect you will ; but I shall be a man before long, and a great merchant, right here in New York, and I'll see if *boys* can't have their rights as well as judges. Come on, Bob, with your broken head ! Come, Sphinx ; make a nice bow to that fellow in the

blue coat and the club, and thank him for your night's lodging."

A perfect storm of applause and laughter followed their going; but as Bibbs attempted to accompany them, he was detained.

"I have not done with you," said the judge, sternly. "Lock him up, officer, till I am ready to attend to his case."

So the bully was dragged away bellowing; and I may as well say here, that Mr. Bell thought it best to place Bibbs in a private reformatory, where he was taught a trade, and sent to school, so getting a chance to become an honest man. The merchant also took care of the lame mother, giving her a monthly allowance, so that on, the whole, she was better off and less worried than when her bad son was at large, and likely any day to fall into crime.

Clovis and Bob went straight to the hut.

"There is no use in *my* returning to the store. You may do as you like, Bob,—but I broke my word to Mr. Bell. I fought a battle. He said, 'Clovis, when you fight a battle, I have done with you.' I am not sorry I licked Bibbs, I would do it again under the same circumstances; but you see I cannot

think of being cash any longer at Wolfe, Lambe and Co.'s."

"Blossom-bud will feel awful bad! and Mother Bunch, and what ever will Miss Lily say?" suggested Bob, who much desired to keep the first chance he had ever had for respectability. "I wish it hadn't happened. I do wish we had gone some other way last night!"

"And left little Sphinx to be knocked about and hurt! I don't, then," said Clovis; "I hope they will take Bibbs in hand, "I wish I had hit him harder."

"But I have plagued you again, when all the old things I did are getting forgotten, and you promised to be my friend; I wish I had never come here; I wish I had gone right off fiddling just as soon as I got well."

"Don't talk so, Bob, I love you! We took a swear on that old Bible to be true brothers to one another, as long as we lived. I'm going to keep *my* promise; I expect you to keep yours!"

Bob went and sat in the corner, while Clovis walked up and down thinking, and cried bitterly.

"If we were only back into yesterday," thought he; "and could do it all better, how light-hearted I could feel."

Little Sphix was the only one of the three who appeared at the store that morning. He wanted to tell somebody, but began to shake in his shoes when he saw Mr. Lambe coming and dared not open his mouth. Finally, he got up his courage to walk over to Mr. Rexford's desk.

The book-keeper happened to glance in his direction, and saw a frightened little creature, with his knuckles to his eyes, and his knees shaking as if he had been ordered a whipping.

"Clovis and Bob, sir, if you please, they ain't come; they fit last night along of Bibbs, cause he was a hurting me, and was took up. My ma said I was to tell."

Mr. Rexford stuck his pen over his ear, and wheeled about on his high stool, while tens of thousand, went on adding in his busy brains and knitted his brows and stared at the trembling boy.

"What is the matter, mite? Who had a fit? Where was the fit?"

"Clovis sir, and Bob; they fit, he fit, Bibbs fit them," cried Sphix, raising his treble to a shrill squeak.


"Oh, fight, fighting, *fit*, is your conjugation of the verb; now let me hear all about the fit."

Mr. Bell had a heart too full of sorrow to think

of leaving his daughter, and did not come to the store ; and Mr. Rexford thought best to quit his work and take the case into his own hands. He guessed pretty well, Clovis' state of mind, and wished himself to see and speak with him of his feelings, and the consequences of what he had done, justifying and approving him in his own thoughts for his defense of the weak little manikin whose tears of gratitude fell thick and fast, while he gave his account of the night.

CHAPTER XLVI.

ANOTHER GLIMPSE OF ROARING RIVER.

“USPUNT,” said Mrs. Starbird, one morning on rising from her bed, “Huspunt, I feel it borne in upon my spirit that it is high time I flew on wings of affection to seek my son—my only son Absalom, as David said, when his scapegrace of a rebel got caught in a tree by his hair, and served him right, too. In the visions of the night my boy has appeared to me, brave and beautiful, but also in

trouble. I must go to him. Either he has worn out his flannings and neglected to buy more, or he has been exposed to some contiguous disease. He needs his mother. You have kept me from sending him things, and from corresponding; and very likely he thinks I have forgotten him, but no, no; when he is a parent he will realize that a mother can never forget her sucking child; I have been around all this long while with my head hanging down like a bulrush because you insisted that you knew best, but you have had your way long enough; you really must indulge *me*, now. Procrastination ceases to be a virtue. I am going to New York! I am going to see Clovis Starbird! that is my mind, Huspunt, now I have told it, and I mean to stand to it. Here I raise my Ebenezer, as Job said to Bildad the shoemaker, for as Jezebel told Sampson, I believe the Philistines be upon him in some shape, and I shall neither eat nor drink till I've slain Saul."

"Good! excellent!" cried Mr. Starbird, rubbing his hands in great glee. "When my Emilene does break out she hits the nail every time. As to the boy, he is doing well. My policeman has not failed a day yet. He has honestly earned his money; and Mr. Rexford and Mr. Bell have been more than kind in their abundant information. That young man

describes the old dame and the hut and all so clearly, that I seem to see the whole ; it is as good as reading an interesting book. But at the same time, Emeline, my dear, if you have made up your mind, that settles the matter. I feel myself, as though we had pretty well proved our boy's mettle, and as if affairs was fully ripe ; in fact, I was about to propose to you to pay him a visit, so if you can get ready, we will be off this very day."

Clotilde danced for joy, two such pleasures were almost too much : a journey—and a good time with her twin at the end of it.

Therefore "Huspunt" put his women-folk into the car with benign cheerfulness ; and he was writing "Mr. Starbird, wife and daughter, Roaring River," in the visitor's book of St. James Hotel at nearly the same period of time in which Mr. Rexford reasoned with Clovis, of things past, present, and to come, in the hut.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE FULLNESS OF DAYS.



HAT same evening a most unexpected messenger summoned Master Clovis to meet his family, and give an account of himself, and it was with a very strange mixture of emotions that he started out. He had so accustomed himself to believe that they had willfully blotted him from their lives ; neglecting and abandoning him to his self-sought fate, that he could scarcely credit his eyes when he read the note from his father, and it must be confessed that he wept a few tears secretly, and that his heart jumped and thumped in his breast.

"Good bye," said Bob. "I expect this is the last between you and me ; of course you will never come back to this place any more. I suppose you will just be trotted off without judge or jury."

"I can't see a foot ahead Bob, but of one thing be sure—you are my brother for life. There are about six folks in this world that belong to me just as much as my blood relations, and you are one of them. How queer it seems ! Here we jogged on

so long as if no change could ever come, and now, whop! everything is upside down or downside up, I don't know which."

Clovis walked in a sort of dream, and the next thing he realized he was close clasped in his mother's arms, and Clotilde's kisses were on his cheeks.

"Come, Emeline, don't worship the young rascal," shouted Mr. Starbird, with great affectation of roughness, as the weeping mother slid down on her knees at the lad's feet. "Don't worship him; he is no saint."

"Oh, Huspunt! this my son was lost, and is found; you really must indulge me, because I am going to cry all I want to."

"So do, Emeline, so do, my dear," answered the gentleman, wiping his eyes and blowing his nose violently.

"Mother," said Clovis, kneeling down and looking into her eyes, "I thought you had forgotten you had a boy—"

"Then why didn't you write to her! Why didn't you come home?"

"I could not. Dad, you know I couldn't! I got pretty much discouraged sometimes; but I always knew I must stick to my bargain—especially as you kept away and remained silent—"

"That is all you know about it. I've heard considerable, one way and another. Now you may tell your story, commencing from the moment when you flung off in a rage with your old father."

"Huspunt, I wouldn't say too much about *that*," remarked Mrs. Starbird, "when we are all coming safely out of the unpleasant things which cost us so much unhappiness; don't let's have a collapse. Begin, my son; I want to hear *you* talk now; you must indulge me, Huspunt—my son's voice is very sweet to my ear."

It was a long narrative, and the parents felt while they listened, and looked at the young speaker, standing up so straight and tall, that they must get acquainted with him, he had so grown every way out of their knowledge and recollection.

Mrs. Starbird especially followed him with longing, wistful eyes, observing how independently he moved, and how he was able to defend his course, with the courage bought by experience, and she sighed, and was sorrowful in her joy—she saw that her *boy* was lost to her, and the days of cuddling and tucking in were gone forever.

Mother Bunch could not leave her sacred trust, though Clovis begged her to go to his people.

"I would, indeed, good lad," said she; "I want to

tell the lady what a true, upright youngster she has reared, and I should admire to see her face, and the dear sister ; but it is onpossible ; and Blossom-bud, too ; she must stop with Miss Lily ; we cannot be spared ; but give them all my best respects."

Bob called, dressed in his best ; he was very thankful to be asked, and all fervor and fire to meet the kinfolk who had a right to the good boy whom he loved. Bob was proudly produced, and presented as something rare and choice ; but Clovis was much chagrined and disappointed by his behavior ; instead of holding up his head, and giving them a merry smile, he was abashed and shamefaced at sight of Clotilde.

"I am so glad to see you," said the pretty maid ; "you are my brother's friend, and I want you to be mine."

"Are you quite sure you do?" answered Bob ; lifting his eyes to hers, and timidly blushing.

"Oh, yes, indeed ; very, *very* sure."

"Wait a bit ; look at what I have to show you, first. Now, what will you say ?"

He took from his pocket a little paper parcel, and unfolding it, out dropped a fine handkerchief, which he picked up, and offered to Miss Starbird, with a shy, averted face. '

"Why, that is mine ! see my name in the corner ; how queer !"

"Do you not remember me now ?"

"I guess not," replied she, slowly, studying his face as she spoke—I *do* seem to recollect—but no, I don't think I ever saw you before."

"Listen, Miss Clotilde."

Bob sang a couplet of his old song.

"Does not that recall to your thoughts a ragged fellow you seated at your fine table one winter time, when you played grown-up lady and poured the coffee ?"

"I do remember very well, two stroller boys," answered she, slowly. "I felt very sorry about them afterward."

"I know why. I felt sorry too, but it was not my fault ; I did not find out till it was too late ; and harper Ben, he is dead and gone ; I must not speak against my poor mate, but I always said, the day would some time come, when I could go back and make that right."

"Oh, I am so glad it was not you !" exclaimed Clotilde, joyfully, "so very glad ?"

"And do you still want me for a friend ?"

"Yes, I will have you now, because you remember the merry morning. Oh, how hungry you were !

You are handsomer than you were that day. I like handsome boys."

"I am cleaner, thanks to your brother, who is the very best fellow in this whole world. I am earning my living. I am respectable; but if you feel at all as if you had rather have me go away and come no more, now that you have heard all, how I used to fiddle and beg in the street, just tell me, and I'll disappear."

"You mustn't say that; it sounds as if I was mean and proud. I like you better for all that, and you shall make tales of what you did in those times. I shall pity you very much."

"Thank you, you are just like Clovis; and I say, Miss Clotilde, may I keep that handkerchief? I have got kinder used to carrying it in my pocket. I should miss it. Please give it back to me!"

"You two are going to be great cronies, I see," said Clovis. "If Lily Bell was only here, well and strong, how happy we should all be!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A SHADOW IN THE HOUSE.



WEEK had now passed since the robbery, and Lily Bell lay among her pillows, pale, quiet, and with her eyes fixed on her father, who sat by her bedside holding her little hand in one of his.

He leaned his face in his other one, so that she could not see his shaded eyes; but she knew how heavy and hopeless they were, and how his sore heart ached: she knew that she was about to leave him alone.

The prints of the hag's fingers were still on her neck. She never rose from her bed after that dreadful night. Her enfeebled system gave way under the fright and agitation, and all Mother Bunch's cares were fruitless, all Blossom-bud's tears. She just faded before their eyes, like the pale primroses that die unmarried.

"Papa," said she softly, "have you got three bright silver dollars for me?"

"A thousand, if you want them," answered he,

taking down his hand and trying to smile cheerfully.

"Thank you, good Papa, three will do ; one for Blossom-bud, one for Clovis, and the other for Bob ; I know they will like to keep them for my sake, and I hope they will call me by my pretty name as long as they live."

"Yes, Birdie, an excellent idea. I must hunt some fresh from the mint, unsullied by vulgar fingers, which have never been exchanged for anything common or unclean. A good friend you are to them all, and they are well worth it ; the girl is a pretty creature, and she loves my daughter dearly. Don't talk any more now, Pet, I am afraid you will tire yourself."

"No, Papa, I feel like talking. I must tell you what I have been planning ; and please promise to fix everything just as I ask. Dear Papa ! you have been such a precious Papa to me ; you have made my life so sweet and pleasant ; I want you always to think of me happy and content, after I am gone. Yes, darling Papa, I'm going, you know it ; I see in your face the shadow of the parting that is just here. I cannot stop much longer. I wish I could. I hate to leave you alone. I know how you will miss your Birdie when your arms are empty."

Mr. Bell laid his face on her pillow, and great sobs convulsed his frame. Lily dropped her thin hand tenderly amongst his gray hairs, patting softly his head.

"Don't, Papa, don't !" said she, after a moment of dumb agony, in which she was struggling for strength and steadiness to speak gently. "You break my heart. Come, lie down by me, fold me in your strong arms, let me cuddle in my nest. Oh ! that is so nice, it feels so good to be squeezed close up to you. When the last hour comes I wish you would hold me just as you do now. It seems as if I could have better courage to die here, feeling your love all around me. If God is a kind father, why should I dread to go to Him ? I don't think I do, much ; but I hate to leave you."

"Oh merciful Christ !" cried Mr. Bell, "take me too ; let us go together !"

"No, no, Papa, there is a great deal for you to do before you come. You must be good to Mother Bunch as long as she lives. Bring all her things here and give her a home ; let her keep your house and pray for you ; and Papa, look at me ! please promise to lift Blossom-bud right into my nest, just as soon as you put me out of it ; quick ! before you feel it empty, open your arms and your kind heart

to my dear, *dear* girl, my only friend. I shall rejoice with joy to know ~~that~~ you have a birdie, a pretty, sweet loving child, who will do all for you I meant to do. I will tell you a secret, Papa—now that I must die, I can bear to speak of it. If I grew up to be a woman I could never have Clovis for mine—he belongs to Blossom-bud, and I have got no pretty boy for myself. I know what philanthropy means. I found out, a little while ago, since I got these ugly spots on my face; since I am not handsome any more. Clovis was shocked when he saw them, he tried to hide it, but he could not from me. Yes, Papa, I know *you* love me just as well; but when I look in the mirror I feel sorry you have lost your beautiful child, and have only a scarred thing, it makes one shiver to see. Take care of Bob, too, he has no one but us, and you will have a boy and a girl to love, and when you are good to them God will be good to me. Papa, dear, blessed Papa! oh, how I thank you! oh, how I love you.

CHAPTER XLIX.

OH, FAIR DOVE! OH, FOND DOVE!



T was all over. The last prayers were said; Mother Bunch folded the little hands over the breast of the quiet sleeper and placed in them a bunch of buds half opened. There was no pain in Lily's dying; she floated away into the spirit-land from her father's heart, and lying in her coffin among her fresh flowers, she was heavenly beautiful. All trace of her disfigurement cleared off, leaving her perfect features pure as innocence. Her eyelids dropped softly over her eyes, and her pretty lips parted in a faint wistful smile. She lay in reposeful peace, which it comforted the hearts of the mourners to remember. And when the closed casket was buried out of their sight, the presence of the lovely and beloved child was a living power in the household. She still dwelt among them, though they saw her no more.

All her desires were carried out. Mr. Bell never forgot a word of his darling's last confidence, and it

was the business and pleasure of his life to perfect her plans, implied and expressed.

Mother Bunch was installed in her sunny, cheerful room for life.

"This is your very own," said Lily, when she came so joyfully to nurse her; "Blossom-bud has lent you to me, and you are going to make me well."

All the cherished possessions which the three-children loved were removed from the dear old nook where they first knew them, and set up in the new home: the sailor-chest, holding Nan's clothes, the claw-foot stand with the Holy Bible and the Methodist hymn-book atop, and Christopher, the bulfinch, sang in the window.

"The hut," as the comfortable retreat was called in the family, became the gathering-place, where, morning and evening they sang the dear tunes and lifted their prayers; and Mr. Bell sometimes seemed to feel the pressure of his Birdie's fingers on his, when Blossom-bud offered him a timid caress.

Clovis and she were called to the bedside of their departing friend, and received the bright silver dollars with her good-bye kiss.

Her meek, patient glance followed them as they turned sobbing to each other's arms.

A wistful smile and a faint pressure of her papa's hand told him her hidden emotions, and he resolved that he would, some day in the future, let the *man* Clovis know how faithfully his Lily had loved the boy.

CHAPTER L.

GATHERING UP THE THREADS.



HERE is little more to tell. Pat Hafferty was "set up" in his Branch, and as Mr. Rexford was about cutting loose from his desk at Wolfe, Lambe and Co.'s, it was thought best that Clovis should start as salesman at the notion counter, under his friend's care, and Bob, who hated to be left behind, begged hard to be permitted to cry cash in the Branch, and they took little Sphinx along—as Bob said, to try to put some pluck in him.

Mr. Starbird showed much wisdom and sound sense in making his decision upon his only son's future life.

"Hrs. art," cried the wife, "our only son will

grow up a perfect interregnum if you leave him here. Where is his education?"

"But, my dear, Emeline, his studying days are too thoroughly interrupted; he cannot slip back into a careless school-boy again, any more than you and I could be young by wishing. He has fallen into a good business; let him realize his dream and become a great merchant."

"Huspunt, I fail to see the *sequel*. I devoted him to the ministry at his birth; seems to me I cannot give it up. He is but fifteen years old."

"I started out for myself at fourteen, Emeline, and I attended night schools; let him do the same. I had much rather have him a good merchant than a poor preacher."

"Huspunt, you really must indulge me!"

"I will, Emeline, in everything except interfering in this maater. It has fixed itself. I dare not unfix it."

The two lads were taken into the Bell family, and the fond mother, seeing that her boy was zealous, and full of bright hopes over his prospects, was fain to resign him; but numberless were the injunctions she imposed on the dame regarding his health and his flannings.

Mr. John Rexford went abroad that autumn :

his heart was not light, but he kept his trial to himself, and in the hours he spent with the hut folks, while he was closing up his affairs, they found him always cheerful and pleasant. Nobody knew of his day-dreams. Blossom-bud was very fond of him. She was useful in the place to which Providence had so plainly called her. Mr. Bell depended on her for a daughter's love, and adopted her as his own; as Lily desired.

So what was there for John but to put his hopes in his pocket and start out again on the lonely existence he had borne before the good days: and he went cheerfully, making no moan over the inevitable.

The two merchants tried hard to induce John to accept funds for his artist course, but he preferred his independence. He sold his marine and went on painting.

There was one pleasant occasion at which they all assisted before he set sail—Pat Hafferty's wedding; and they gave gifts to the bride in the name of the precious dear heart which loved to be a philanthropist.

I forgot to tell you that old Gruffy was sent to prison for life, so Blossom-bud was able to sleep in safety.

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Thus ends the history of these young folks, and I must say good-bye, dear Readers, but I trust not for ever.

JULIE P. SMITH,
Esperanza.

THE END.

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